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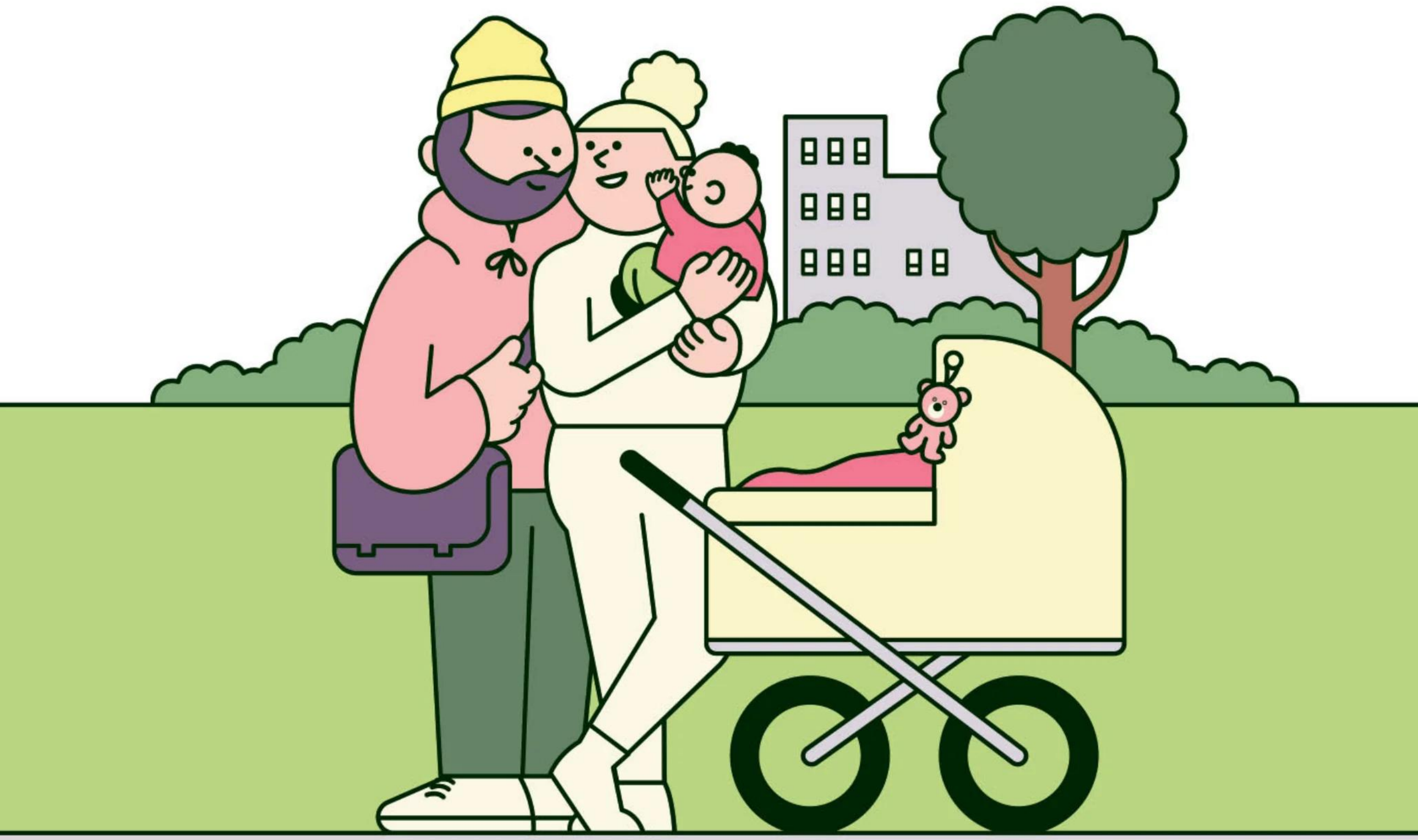

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE RIDGE RACER GAME?

DARRAN JONES

I absolutely adore *Ridge Racer 2* on the PSP. The game is packed with great content and looks amazing when running on the RetroTink 4K.
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing:
Castlevania Dominus Collection
Favourite game of all time:
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast

TIM EMPEY

Ridge Racer Revolution was the one I played most on the PlayStation, fun times.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go
Currently playing:
Baldur's Gate III
Favourite game of all time:
God Hand

NICK THORPE

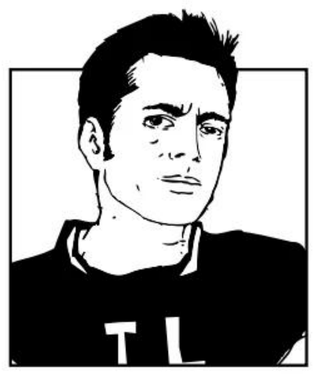
Ridge Racer Type 4 is arguably the best in the series, but *Ridge Racer Revolution* earned a permanent place in my heart the first time I played it on a demo disc. Sunny beaches and *Drive U 2 Dancing*, what's not to like?
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing:
HoloCure: Save The Fans!
Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog

ANDY SALTER

Ridge Racer V is the only one I remember playing and that's because it was a PlayStation 2 launch title. I was working on a tips mag at the time and had to map some tracks for it.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently modding:
RTR: Imperium Surrectum
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War* although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now

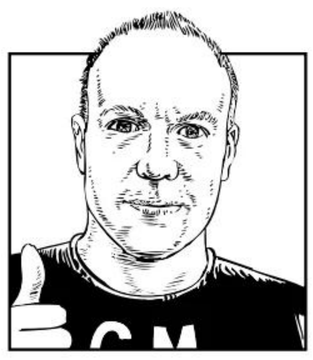
ANDREW FISHER

Ridge Racer V. I'm not the biggest fan of the series, but this was a great effort on PS2.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing:
Kena: Bridge Of Spirits
Favourite game of all time:
Wizball



IAIN LEE

Ridge Racer on the PlayStation. Absolutely destroyed that game. I'd never imagined we could have graphics, speed and sound like that in the home.
Expertise: Buying expensive stuff on eBay then never touching it
Currently playing:
Cluedo on Steam
Favourite game of all time:
Elite (BBC Model B)



GRAEME MASON

I have fond memories of *Rage Racer*. It's not the smoothest experience in the series, but back in 1997 its visuals were stunning and I was hooked.
Expertise: Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver
Currently Playing:
Alien: Isolation
Favourite game of all time:
Resident Evil 4

MARTYN CARROLL

Rage Racer for the PlayStation. I loved *Rave Racer* in the arcades, but this exclusive console release had more depth, and the most epic tracks of the entire series.
Expertise: Sinclair stuff
Currently playing:
Stardew Valley
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy

PAUL ROSE

Ridge Racer Full Scale. I mean, c'mon; most elaborate controller ever!
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing *Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora*
Favourite game of all time:
Half-Life 2

LOADING...

Few games were as impactful as Namco's PlayStation port of *Ridge Racer*. While it's not quite as arcade-perfect as many of the reviews would have had you believe at the time, there is no denying that it was an incredible-looking game that helped make Sony's console an essential piece of kit.

It quickly become emblematic of arcade racing quality on the PlayStation – most likely helped by the fact the console games felt so similar to the arcade originals – and a new game would often launch alongside a new Sony console.

With that in mind, this issue will not only look at the evolution of the core series in arcades and in the home but also its numerous spin-offs, with insight from Namco staff who were just as impressed by the popular franchise as we were.

Equally impressive are the other features we've lined up for you in this issue. Garry Kitchen explains the genesis of *Keystone Kapers*, veterans of Westwood Studios take us behind the scenes of *The Legend Of Kyrandia*, while David Wise discusses his exceptional musical career in videogames. We also take a look at *Die Hard Arcade* and *Super SWIV*, highlight some of the Commodore 16's best games, and review Konami's magnificent new *Castlevania* compilation.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

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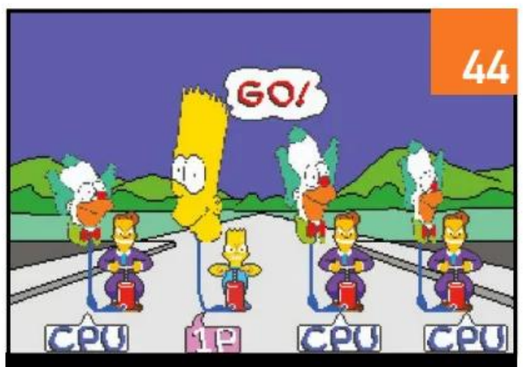

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The Evolution of Ridge Racer

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Discover how a popular TV show inspired Garry Kitchen's entertaining platformer

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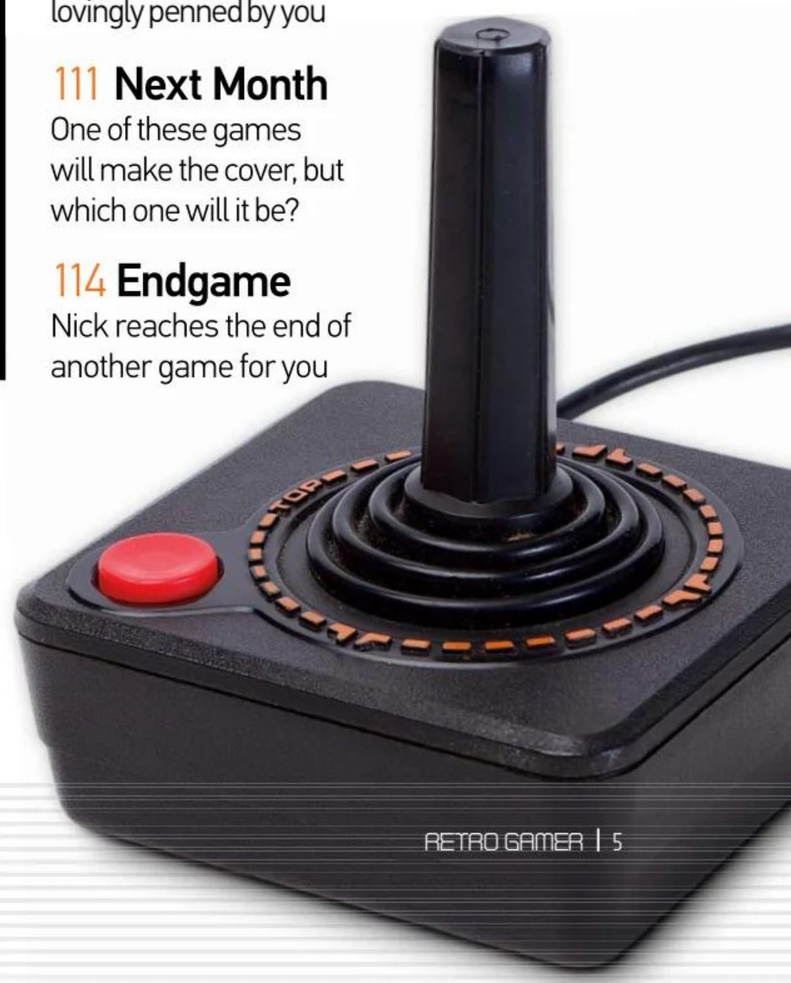

» [Switch] Both *IK+* and the original *International Karate* are included on System 3's new compilation.

FIGHT CLUB

The incoming retro games battling for your attention

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Nick continues his quest to revisit every month of 2008. Where will he end up next?

There's been a flurry of retro activity recently, with all manner of excellent games, compilations and remakes in the works. The most unexpected reveal was System 3's announcement of its *The Last Ninja Collection*, which has already smashed its 10K Kickstarter goal after just 40 minutes. The new collection includes the three *The Last Ninja* games, *Ninja Remix*, *International Karate*, *IK+* and *Bangkok Knights*. "We're in an era where nostalgia and retro games are central to gaming culture, and there's a strong appetite for these classic experiences," System 3's Mark Cale tells us. "With advances in technology, we can now offer the definitive *The Last Ninja* retro experience on both Switch and PC, something fans have been eagerly awaiting years for."

» Mark Cale has big hopes for the incoming Kickstarter for *The Last Ninja Collection*.

The compilation includes multiple versions of each game and also features the involvement of veteran coder John Twiddy. "John is a vital part of this project," Mark explains. "John is working closely with our team to oversee the technical aspects of the collection, ensuring that the games are faithfully recreated and optimised. His expertise and intimate knowledge of the original code are invaluable as we work to preserve the authenticity of the gameplay while making it accessible to today's audience."

The Silver tier costs £25 and includes a digital edition of the collection, while the £50 Gold tier includes a physical Switch copy. The biggest surprise is that the £150 Diamond tier option will include some fantastic physical PC DVD extras – extensive demos of *IK++*, which featured the involvement of the late Archer

» The Diamond tier Kickstarter will feature physical PC DVD versions of *The Last Ninja 4* and *International Karate ++* and are limited to 7,500 copies.

» [Switch] *The Last Ninja* series was huge on the C64. Knowing original programmer John Twiddy is involved makes us very happy..

» [Switch] There are plenty of fighting games to choose from in System 3's new compilation, including *Bangkok Knights*.

Maclean, as well as *The Last Ninja 4*. "It's incredibly exciting, yet bittersweet," continues Mark. "*IK++* and *The Last Ninja 4* are unfinished work-in-progress demo sequels that we've decided to include as part of our Diamond tier on Kickstarter, offering fans a rare glimpse into what might have been. The discs will also include the original concept storyboards, in-game art, 3D Max models, and game editors and demos for *The Last Ninja 4*. Additionally, we'll be sharing redacted email trails and settlements from companies that cease partnerships, showing our audience that *The Last Ninja* series has been a labour of love for over three decades."

The final piece of the puzzle is a WIP demo version of *The Last Ninja 4* which was restarted in 2017, but ultimately shelved due to rising development costs. "We're releasing these work-in-progress PC demos in a limited run, ensuring that these pieces of gaming history are shared with those who truly appreciate their significance," says Mark. "Once this limited manufacturing run is over, these demos will never be used or sold again. It's a unique opportunity for our backers to own a piece of videogaming history, and we're thrilled to be able to share these long-lost projects, even in their incomplete form, along with all the history and documentation that supports videogame preservation – something fans of the series can actively participate in."

Fighting was definitely a theme at Gamescom too, with Capcom surprising everyone with the news that *Capcom Fighting Collection 2* is in the works in addition to the already announced *Marvel Vs Capcom Fighting Collection: Arcade Classics*. Due out next year it includes *Capcom Vs SNK: Millennium Fight 2000 Pro*, *Capcom Vs SNK 2: Mark Of The Millennium 2001*, *Capcom Fighting Evolution*, *Street Fighter Alpha 3 Upper*, *Power Stone*, *Power Stone 2*, *Project Justice* and *Plasma Sword: Nightmare Of Bilstein*. Each game features online play and is packed with extras.

Digital Eclipse also had some great announcements. In addition to *Worms Armageddon: Anniversary Edition* (see page 12 for more info) it also announced the next game in its Gold Master series, *Tetris Forever*. Coinciding with the series' 40th anniversary, it will feature the usual behind-the-scenes extras and include over 15 classic *Tetris* games, including *Tetris Battle Gaiden*, *Hatris*, *Super Tetris 3* and the brand-new game *Tetris Time Warp*.

In addition to revealing the aforementioned *Capcom Fighting Collection 2* and *Tetris Forever*, Nintendo's Direct show also announced some excellent offerings from Konami, including the surprise shadow drop of *Castlevania Dominus Collection* (reviewed on page 94), which includes the three DS *Castlevania* games, *Haunted Castle*, and *Haunted Castle Revisited*, a reimagined version of the 1988 arcade game. M2 is behind the project, and Limited Run Games has already confirmed a physical option which is available to preorder now. Konami also used the show to confirm that its long-awaited *Suikoden* collection featuring the first two acclaimed games would be arriving in March 2025.

That's a lot of retro goodness heading our way over the next few months and you can be sure we'll be reviewing each game as and when they are released into our hands. ✱

> "Once this limited manufacturing run is over, these demos will never be used or sold again"
> **MARK CALE**

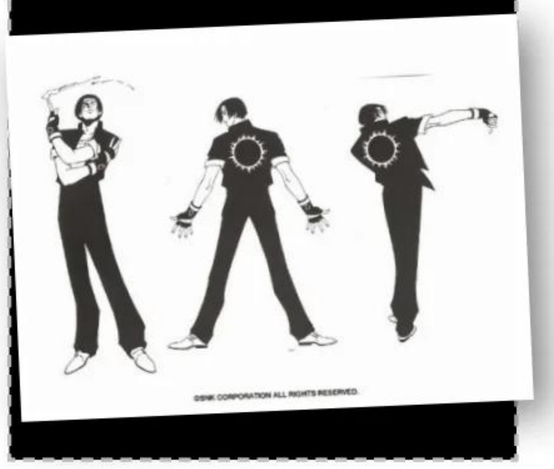
***The Last Ninja Collection* is on KickStarter now. Head to bit.ly/rg264_ninja for more info.**

CROC RETURNS

The newly revived Argonaut Games recently revealed that a HD remaster of *Croc: Legend Of The Gobbos* is heading to contemporary systems later this year. Originally pitched as a *Yoshi* game, *Croc* found success on 32-bit consoles and received a sequel in 1999. The new remaster will include updated visuals, improved controls and plenty of behind-the-scenes-access. Expect a review soon.

30 YEARS OF KOF

SNK's *The King Of Fighters* franchise recently turned 30 and the publisher has big plans for the series. While no new games have been currently announced it has been sharing numerous documentation on its official webpage, including discounts, behind-the-scenes production art and stickers. You can follow the unveiling of all 30 announcements by heading to kof30th.com/en



Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance counsellor who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. You can get more information about Iain by visiting iainleecounselling.com or heading over to patreon.com/iainandKatherine

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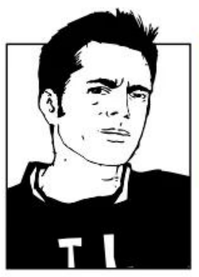
Zzap! Live 2024



I was lucky enough to be invited to be part of the Zzap! Live event in mid-August. My task was to interview the Graftgold team of Steve Turner, Andrew Braybrook and Iain Wallington. Stuff like that makes me nervous for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's a Commodore-based event. And while I really do love that whole scene, as a BBC Micro man I felt like an infiltrator. Secondly, while I had done my research (including reading the new book that's just come out about them) there will always be people in the audience who know way more about it than I do.

I shouldn't have worried. The three of them were great interviewees. Iain and I bonded over the correct spelling of our names (and how Americans always refer to us as Lain) and all three required very little probing, so to speak. They're the kind of guest where you ask them a question and they "waffle on" (Andrew's words, not mine) for ages. Beautiful and a real thrill to be on the stage talking about *Uridium*, *AlleyKat* and *Flying Shark*. There's a video on YouTube if you fancy it.

The rest of the day was a delight for me. I got to catch up with old friends including Chris Wilkins, the brains behind the event, Paul Drury and his potty-mouthed quiz, and Retro Faith. Even more special for me was being approached by fans of this fine magazine and this silly column. Quite often I'll be sat at home staring at a blank page and scratching my head trying to think of things to say. Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's a slog. I never know if anyone looks at those words or skips past my page to jump to something *proper*. So many of you took the time to come up to me and say how much you enjoyed my stuff. A sincere thank you to all of you, it means the world.

Another thing I enjoy about these events is the vibe. There's something magical about being in a room (or narrow hallway at times) surrounded by people who share a similar interest to you. You can see the emotion as memories come flooding back. There were also a fair few kids there. I chatted briefly to a lad who must have been about eight. He said the talks were a little long, some bits were boring but overall they were having a good day. You know what, for an eight year old surrounded by musty old machines and even mustier old men, that's a pretty good response. And even more importantly, he will look back and remember that day with great fondness. It might not be for another 20 or 30 years, but at some point that event will resonate with him almost as much as an Amiga connects with his dad now.

Well done to everyone who put this on. No one is getting rich doing these things and they only work if people actually rock up, so do support retro meets where you can. *

> "There's something magical about being in a room (or narrow hallway at times) surrounded by people who share a similar interest to you"

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Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Jumping through hoops

I'm a bit late to the party when it comes to the current generation of consoles, but I was very kindly given a PS5 last year. There are aspects of PS5 gaming that I really enjoy, and there are other aspects… that I absolutely detest, and which make me yearn for a simpler time. Yes: yearning! I'm officially that old now that I yearn for the golden age of gaming!

Take the game I got for my birthday in August: it's the new one based upon the *Avatar* movies. First I had to install it from the disc. This took an hour. Then I had to download an update. This required me to find the details of my PlayStation account – which I hadn't logged into in years, and required me to jump back and forth between laptop and console. Then I couldn't get online to download said update, because the back room in my house doesn't get great Wi-Fi. I had to unravel my ethernet cable, trailing it through the house, before finally getting online and downloading the patch. Which took another hour or so.

Then I finally get into the game and discover I need some sort of UbiSoft account in order to play it. I sign up for said account on my laptop, to be told I already have an account, so now have to reset my password etc etc.

From unwrapping said birthday present and placing it into my PS5 it took over three hours before I could even play. And then I had to sit through what felt like a week of cutscenes before I could even actually get into the game proper.

Remember going to a shop, coming home on the bus while reading the manual, and – depending on your vintage – either slapping a cart into the top of your games system and playing immediately, or waiting 20 minutes for it to load on a cassette deck? Yes, the floppy era was slightly more of a faff, but nothing like what we have to endure now. We don't even have a manual to read while we're getting set up!

I mean, in the olden days (told you I'm old) there was just enough effort that by the time you started playing you felt you'd earned it. Now it takes so long that the whole earning-it barrier is breached, and you end up firmly in the irritation paddock. I mean, by the time I started playing the *Avatar* game I was resentful of its very existence.

It's not like we're living in an era where we've all got infinite time. When I first started playing games, all I had to do – outside of school – was play games. How do adults find the time to do this anymore, with the time-consuming hoops you now have to jump through?

Get me back to an era where playing a game was a near-instantaneous activity. Yes, look, I know that something like this *Avatar* thing is leagues more massive than something like *Jack The Nipper*, *Earthworm Jim* or even an epic like *Elite*, but… you can see why the future is playing games on demand. It feels like we're in a point in history where gaming is kind of broken, and the technology hasn't entirely caught up with itself. It were better in the old days, when gaming was just fields. *

> "By the time I started playing the Avatar game I was resentful of its very existence"

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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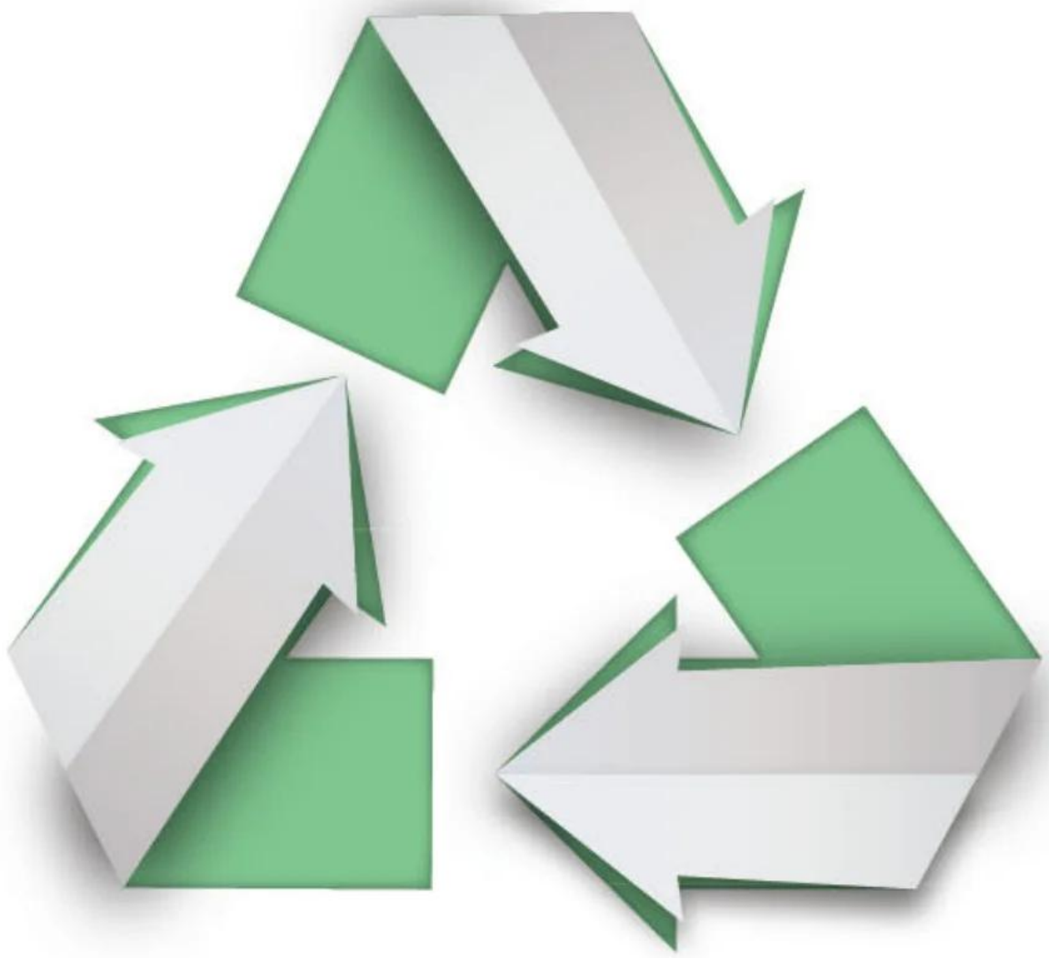

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» [Switch] *Worms Armageddon* is the latest classic game to be given the Digital Eclipse treatment. We can't wait.

Worms Armageddon: Anniversary Edition

How the veteran multiplayer hit is being prepared for a new battle

Multiplayer fanatics have been entertained by the *Worms* games for decades now, and *Worms Armageddon* may just be the best of the bunch. With Team17 and Digital Eclipse preparing *Worms Armageddon: Anniversary Edition* for a 26 September release on all modern consoles, we looked into how and why this project came together.

Why is *Worms Armageddon* receiving a new console port?

Stephen Frost: From my perspective, *Worms Armageddon* is 25 years old at this point and still has such an amazingly loyal and strong following of fans. However, most of that current audience are primarily PC owners who have grown up playing the series, so there's this huge audience out there of console owners who haven't really had an opportunity to to play a modern, updated version of this classic title yet.

Ashley Day: The last versions were on PlayStation, N64 and Dreamcast, all of which lacked a couple of features, most notably online play. With the 25th anniversary approaching, we thought it was a great time to put that right, and in Digital Eclipse we knew we had the right partner to not just adapt *Armageddon* for modern platforms but tell a great behind-the-scenes story too.

This version is based on the original PC source code – why is this important?

Stephen Frost: When we start projects like this, there are generally a lot of factors that determine which version(s) of a game we include or use as the main focus, but oftentimes it boils down to the availability of source code and other related documentation we can find.

In the case of *Worms Armageddon*, Team17 were able to provide us with the original PC source code, so that allowed us to have the most flexibility in being able to modernise and update an already amazing game to meet the expectations of today's gamers. From improvements to the overall UI and adding in quality-of-life improvements, as well as implementing cross-generation online support for all the modern consoles, we hope that this version of *Worms Armageddon* will allow for an even easier point of entry for newcomers to the *Worms* series and further increase the number of fans who are still enjoying the title today.

The customary Digital Eclipse interactive documentary comes in three parts, covering *Worms*, *Worms Armageddon* and what

» Ashley Day – Head of developer relations, Team17

» Stephen Frost – Head of production, Digital Eclipse

» Chris Kohler – Editorial director, Digital Eclipse

happened after. How was this structure decided?

Chris Kohler: Well, we needed to tell the story of *Worms Armageddon*, but *Worms Armageddon* doesn't exist in a vacuum. The story of how *Worms Armageddon* came to be is the story of how the original *Worms* came to be, so obviously we needed to tell all of that for you to be able to understand how this particular game happened. But the other side of the story is, why was *Worms: Armageddon* considered this high-water mark? What happened to the *Worms* series following its release, and what's its legacy? That's what we explore in the documentary following the release of *Armageddon*.

Who have you been able to speak to for the documentary?

Chris Kohler: Loads of people! Well, like seven people. But good ones. Andy Davidson, of course, the formerly teenage computer whiz who dreamed up a game based on tanks but the tanks were worms. How did they become worms? What were they between the time they were tanks and the time they were worms? We know, and we even got permission to show you. Then you've got Bjorn Lynne, Rico Holmes, and even Team 17's erstwhile CEO Debbie Bestwick, all giving their sides of the story. And more special guest stars. Maybe a celebrity.

Worms is not just a very funny game, it's got a very funny story behind it. More broadly it's a story of the era of British "bedroom coders".

» [Switch] Digital Eclipse has become renowned for its interactive documentary presentation, and it's found here too.

While *Llamasoft: The Jeff Minter Story* was about the origins of that era, *War Stories* – as we call this documentary – is about the waning days of it, where a kid could still strike it rich programming their Amiga, but perhaps not for very much longer.

Footage of the original *Total Wormage* prototype is included – how was this sourced?

Ashley Day: When we began work on this project, one of my jobs as the resident retro nut, was to comb through Team17's archives and find content that could be included in the *War Stories* museum timeline. After some time, I found a couple of floppy disks, inside a box containing our last remaining Amiga 4000, and hand-written on those disks was "The Worms". Imagine how thrilled I was when I loaded it up to find it was actually *Total Wormage*! We immediately backed up the disks and got them working in an emulator so that Digital Eclipse could capture brand-new video footage. It's a fantastic by-product of this project that this historically significant demo is now digitally preserved, and I'm sure we'll find some fun uses for it in the future.

> "On those disks was "The Worms". Imagine how thrilled I was when I loaded it up to find it was Total Wormage!"
>
> **ASHLEY DAY**

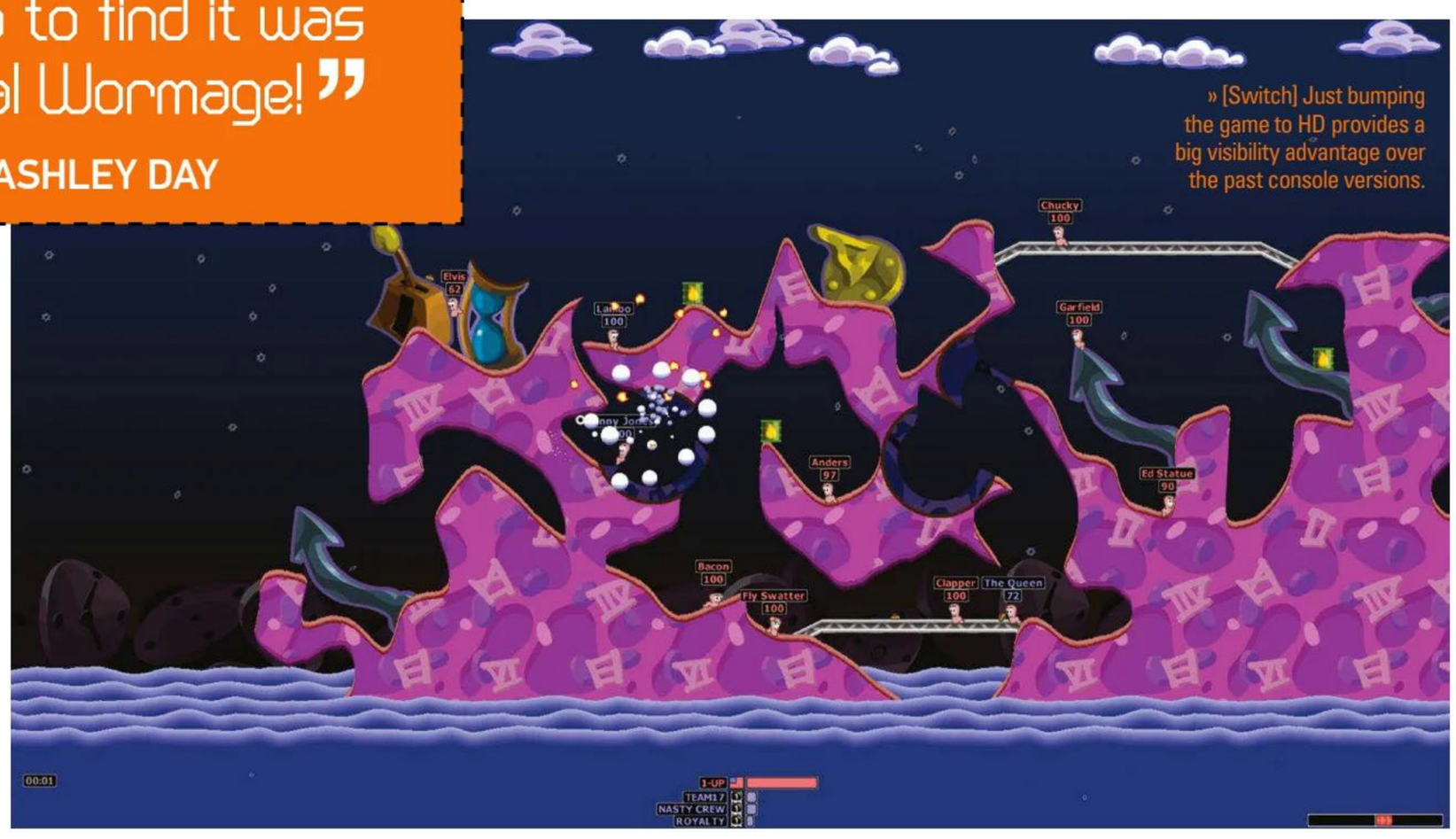
The Game Boy Color version of *Worms Armageddon* has been included as a bonus – what's special about this specific version?

Chris Kohler: *Worms: Armageddon* had to be scaled down so much to be playable on the Game Boy Color that it's basically a 'demake'. I think it's fascinating to look at the differences, be able to compare them side by side, and see what the team was able to accomplish.

Stephen Frost: Also, from our perspective, sometimes the handheld version of a title is *the* one that some fans grew up playing and remember fondly. Being able to tap into that nostalgia and bring back those sorts of positive memories is what we are all about, so we jumped at the chance to include it as a fun, bonus title. ✱

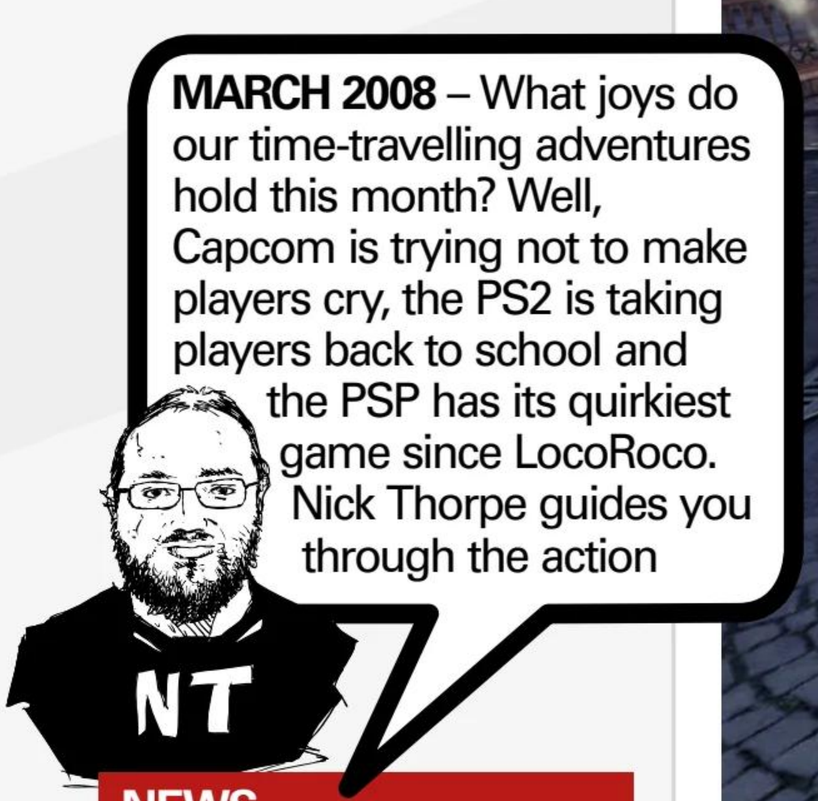
» [Switch] The Game Boy Color version definitely looks and feels quite different to its bigger brothers.

» [Switch] PC players, fear not – this new release isn't coming to PC, so won't replace the version you love.



» [Switch] Just bumping the game to HD provides a big visibility advantage over the past console versions.

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES



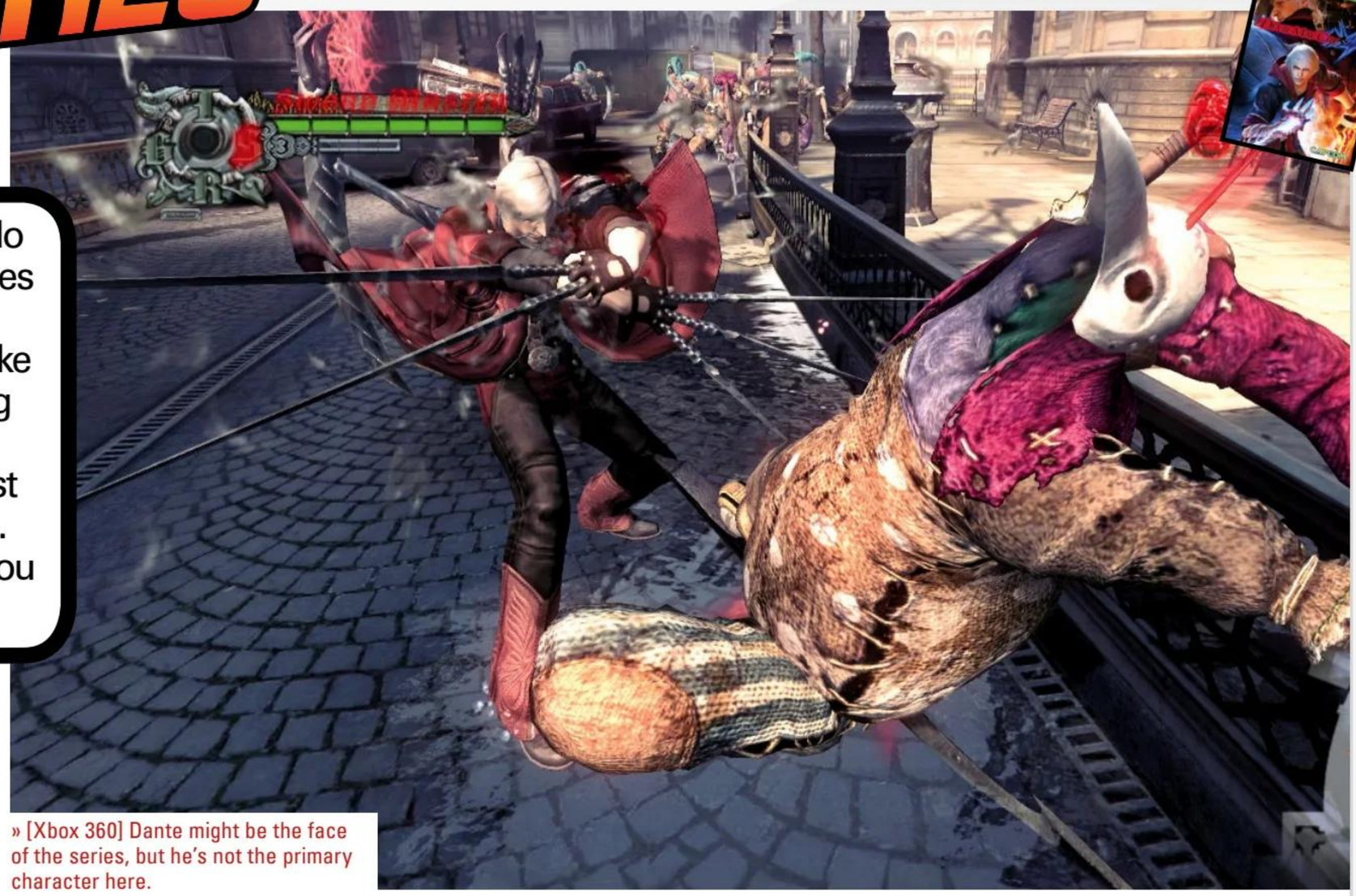
MARCH 2008 – What joys do our time-travelling adventures hold this month? Well, Capcom is trying not to make players cry, the PS2 is taking players back to school and the PSP has its quirkiest game since LocoRoco. Nick Thorpe guides you through the action

NEWS MARCH 2008

American game designer Gary Gygax passed away at the age of 69 on 4 March. In 1968 he established the Lake Geneva Wargames Convention, which became the popular tabletop gaming convention Gen Con. However, he is most famous for *Dungeons & Dragons*, the role-playing game system that he co-created with Dave Arneson – an enormously popular property that has been adapted into movies, videogames and more.

Wales capped off a dominant performance to win the Six Nations rugby union competition on 15 March, defeating France 29-12 in front of 74,609 fans at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. The team, captained by Ryan Jones, achieved a grand slam by winning all five of its matches and set a new record by conceding just two tries along the way.

Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 received its first passenger flight on 27 March, following an official opening by Queen Elizabeth II on 14 March. Problems with the new terminal soon became apparent as the first week saw hundreds of flights cancelled. IT problems were blamed, and British Airways would part ways with both its director of operations and director of customer services in April.



» [Xbox 360] Dante might be the face of the series, but he's not the primary character here.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 2008

Nero was the new kid on the block this month, with the nephew of Dante taking the lead role in *Devil May Cry 4*. Capcom's celebrated hack-and-slash series arrived on the Xbox 360 and PS3 in fine form, earning 5/5 from *360*, 9/10 from *games™* and *Official PlayStation Magazine*, 89% from *Play* and 8/10 from *Edge* and *Official Xbox 360 Magazine*. The big focus here was the new approach to difficulty – *OXM* felt that *Devil May Cry 3* became "insanely difficult far too quickly" and praised the "much slower incline" of the new game, while *games™* felt that, "Taking the *Devil May Cry* formula and enhancing it with accessibility is a masterstroke." *Edge* agreed, saying that "forced to make a game even Bagpuss could complete, Capcom has pulled off the impossible" in retaining the depth fans expected.

While *Devil May Cry* had left the PS2 behind, fans who stuck with the ageing machine actually had something to shout about this month. *Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3* mixed traditional RPG dungeon crawling with high school social simulation to critical acclaim. The game earned 9/10 from *OPM* and 10/10 from *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine* this month, with the former praising it as, "Idiosyncratic, heart-warming, funky and one of the most refreshing RPGs to appear on PS2." These scores were higher than the 64% achieved in *Play* the previous month, which said that "it feels like you're playing an anime that you'd rather not watch".

Also due for praise was *Fire Pro Wrestling Returns*, arriving in PAL form some two-and-a-half years after its initial Japanese release. Despite feeling that it was "no Stacy Keibler in the looks department" *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine* praised the "rare gem of a wrestling game" for its depth, scope for customisation and £19.99 price point, awarding it 9/10. *Official PS2* was surprisingly late with its review, which ran a couple of

» [PlayStation 3] Apparently, this *Turok* doesn't even have the Cerebral Bore. What's the point?

months later, but also gave it 9/10 and called it "the finest budget game we've played in years".

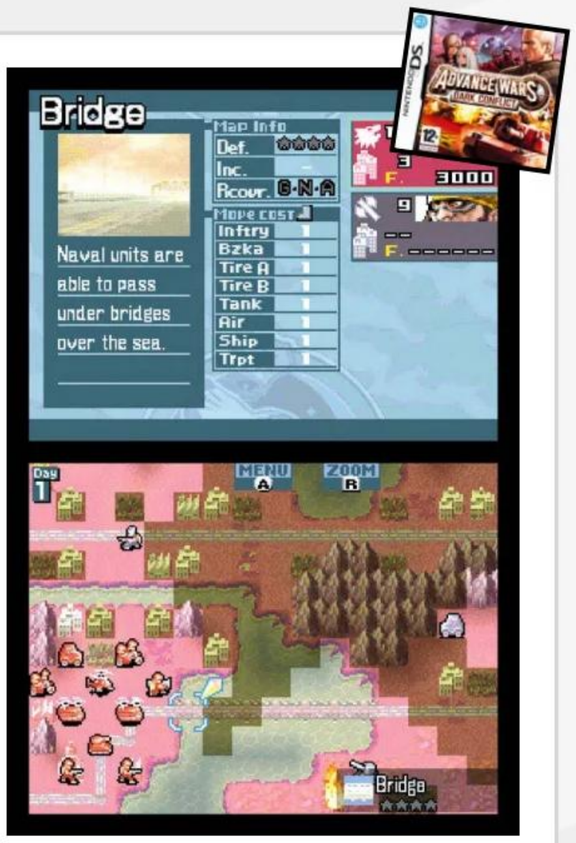
Over on the DS, *Advance Wars: Dark Conflict* may have been less colourful but it was no less enjoyable, earning scores of 90% from *Official Nintendo Magazine*, 9/10 from *games™* and 8/10 from *Edge*. *Edge* felt that the removal of features such as dual front battles from the "distinctly bloated" *Dual Strike* had allowed the game to push "basic tactics – unit strengths, terrain and movement – to the fore" while *games™* praised the online play, "deeper and tougher strategy, and a far more lenient learning curve". *Mario & Sonic At The Olympic Games* also arrived on the DS this month, earning 90% from *ONM* and 9.0/10 from *nRevolution*, which described it as "every bit as good as its big brother" on the Wii.

For PSP owners, the highlight of the month came in the form of the stylish new game *Patapon*, which earned 9/10 from *OPM*, 86% from *Play*, 8/10 from *Edge* and 7/10 from *games™*. *Play* described it as "pretty weird stuff" and suggested that its blend of rhythm action and real-time strategy was a source of "a number of minor frustrations", but felt that it was "a magical game, that's for sure, and when you get past what could be irritants for many, it really comes into its own". Although *games™* offered praise for the art, music and control scheme, it felt that "too often both victory and defeat feel more like luck than judgement" and that grinding for resources was a drag.

Over on the PC, the indie survival horror outing *Penumbra: Black Plague* earned 74% from *PC Gamer*, which said "the atmosphere is relentlessly dark and hostile, with fantastic use of audio to convince you that there's something truly horrible around the next corner", but felt that the "major downturn comes when the monsters finally show up". *Total PC Gaming* gave it 8/10, and praised the "thoroughly warped and sadistic" character of Clarence whose "frequent commentary on your every predicament is a constant source of entertainment".

Lastly, *Turok* on the HD consoles represented a rather underwhelming final outing for the once beloved series, scoring 6/10 in *OPM*, 5/10 in *OXM*, *X360* and *Edge*, 46% in *Play*, 4/10 in *games™* and 1/5 in *360*. *OXM* summed up the mood, describing it as "a crappy collection of unimaginative clichés that you've played and got bored of before".

Can the PS2 keep up this momentum? Join us again next month to find out. ✱



» [DS] *Advance Wars: Dark Conflict*'s script is quite different to its US counterpart *Days Of Ruin*.

» [PSP] *Patapon* is one of the most visually distinctive game series to originate on Sony's handheld.

» [PlayStation 2] Most RPGs would focus on the nocturnal demon battles, but *Persona 3* also does daily school life.

CHARTS

MARCH 2008

XBOX 360

1 – **Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** (Activision)
2 – **Assassin's Creed** (Ubisoft)
3 – **FIFA 08** (EA)
4 – **Halo 3** (Microsoft)
5 – **Guitar Hero III** (Activision)

PC

1 – **Football Manager 2008** (Sega)
2 – **Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** (Activision)
3 – **Crysis** (EA)
4 – **Championship Manager 2008** (Eidos)
5 – **The Sims 2** (EA)

PSP

1 – **FIFA 08** (EA)
2 – **Football Manager 2008** (Sega)
3 – **The Simpsons Game** (EA)
4 – **Medal Of Honor: Heroes 2** (EA)
5 – **Sonic Rivals 2** (Sega)

MUSIC

1 – **Mercy** (Duffy)
2 – **Better In Time/Footprints In The Sand** (Leona Lewis)
3 – **What's It Gonna Be** (H Two O feat. Platnum)
4 – **Stop And Stare** (OneRepublic)
5 – **Rockstar** (Nickelback)

THIS MONTH IN...

nRevolution

Soulcalibur Legends proves that a jaunt into hack-and-slash territory is ill-advised. "The whole thing must have taken Namco's designers about ten minutes to plan out, allowing for a coffee break," says the 4.9/10 review.

Edge

"I'm also interested by the end of backward compatibility in the PS3," says columnist Brick Bardo. "This can't be anything other than SCE saying, 'Stop making games for the PS2! Stop playing with that console!'"

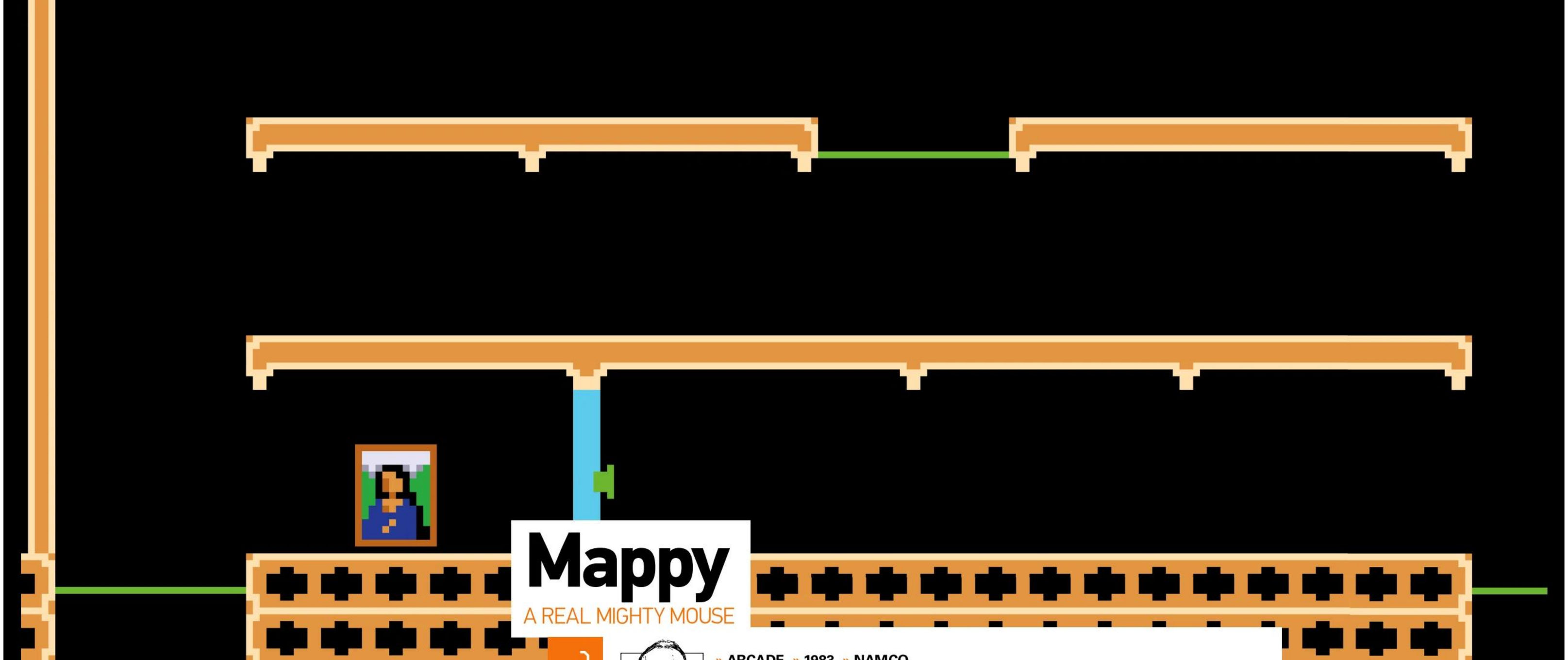
THE UK'S BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE
PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK
WORLD EXCLUSIVE!
FERRARI CHALLENGE
THE DRIVE OF YOUR DREAMS – AND WE'VE PLAYED IT!

Official PlayStation 2

PSP ports are this month's hot topic, and the belief is that porting *God Of War: Chains Of Olympus* makes simple financial sense. "We'd bet the family goat that it's on shelves for Christmas," says the now goat-free magazine.

HIGH SCORE

16150 20000



Mappy

A REAL MIGHTY MOUSE

» ARCADE » 1983 » NAMCO

One thing that Namco really deserves credit for is embracing its heritage pretty early on. Even as early as the mid-Nineties, the developer was packing games like Ridge Racer with references to arcade classics that launched before I was born, and the Namco Museum releases were among first retro gaming compilations I'd ever seen. It's because of that effort that Mappy has lingered on the periphery of my gaming knowledge – despite having very little experience with the game, I could recognise the character, I could tell you who developed it and I could describe the basic layout of the game screen.

When Jeremy Parish mentioned in a recent YouTube video that Mappy had directly inspired Sega's Flicky, I decided that I should really deepen my knowledge and actually spend some time with the game. Mappy is a police officer, whose task is to recover stolen goods from a mansion full of marauding cats, traversing the various platforms via trampoline. Despite enjoying the overall look and sound of the game, especially when the cat boss Goro tried to hide behind a TV, my initial attempts went disastrously. I started to worry that I wouldn't click with the game as I repeatedly found myself boxed in by cats at both ends of a platform within seconds, making escape impossible.

Fortunately, a little patience went a long way. The most important thing was learning to take an extra bounce or two on the trampolines, where Mappy is invincible, to watch what the enemies are doing. Seeing a cat knock itself over with a door, I soon learned about how to stun enemies and gain a brief advantage – especially with the flashing doors that can blast enemies away. My frustration ultimately melted away as I adopted the tactic of recovering items in pairs to build a score multiplier, and while I prefer Flicky overall, I can definitely see myself returning to Mappy in the future. ✱

THE EVOLUTION OF
RIDGE
99
bacura
WARPMAN
namco
99

RACER

SUCCESSOR TO A LONG LINE OF COIN-OP RACERS, RIDGE RACER BROUGHT MOUNTAIN ROAD DRIFTING TO THE ARCADES AND LED TO A WEALTH OF FOLLOW-UPS. FORMER NAMCO CREATIVES JERRY MOMODA, MIKE FISCHER AND RYOTA TOYAMA EXPLAIN HOW RIDGE RACER EVOLVED

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

» [Arcade] Tight cornering by drifting is an essential aspect of winning races in *Ridge Racer*.

» [Arcade] The set-piece visuals in *Ridge Racer* such as bridges and tunnels were very impressive for the time.

To understand where *Ridge Racer* came from you first have to consider that it was the product of two lineages. From a technical perspective, the groundbreaking polygon racer was the end result of a series of Mazda-endorsed driving simulations that were demoed at Japanese trade shows.

The first of these – the *Eunos Roadster Driving Simulator* – appeared in 1989, and was based around a sit-down cab with three side-by-side monitors, the left and right of which were angled to give the effect of a curved front window. Two even more impressive successors called *Sim Road* and *Sim Drive* arrived in 1992. These sat the driver in real Mazda Roadsters with arcade hardware under their bonnets, and projected a panoramic view of the road ahead in front of their windshields. The following year, these popular attractions provided a template for a $250,000 version of *Ridge Racer*, subtitled *Full Scale*, which in keeping with its immediate predecessors incorporated a Roadster and a projected front screen. In terms of gameplay, *Ridge Racer* was an evolution of Namco's long line of hit arcade racers, including *Pole Position*, *Final Lap* and *Winning Run*.

Former Namco US product manager Jerry Momoda was a big fan of Namco's coin-ops long before he joined its ranks after stints working in the arcade divisions of Nintendo, Sega and Atari, but it was a work-in-progress *Ridge Racer* that convinced him to sign up with the firm. "I always had a lot of respect for Namco; whose games included several of my favourites," Jerry reflects. "I joined Namco in 1993 as the product manager in the new Namco America office in San Jose, California.

"THE CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER OF NAMCO, MR NAKAYAMA, WAS REALLY INTO MOVIES. I THINK THIS PASSION INFLUENCED THE LOOK AND FEEL OF NAMCO'S GAMES"

JERRY MOMODA

I was teased with an early look at *Ridge Racer*, and I was so impressed. It was state-of-the-art 3D that included texture mapping and Gouraud shading – and all this at 60fps."

Despite his Japanese heritage, the US born, 3rd generation 'sansei', Jerry spoke very little Japanese, and so his communications with Namco in Japan required a translator and involved long shifts. Part of his role was to use his knowledge of what was popular in US arcades to make suggestions to the Japanese *Ridge Racer* team, in order to make sure that Namco's new racer could go toe-to-toe with Sega's. "My counterpart in Tokyo was Kohei Teraoka in the overseas division. He was my 'go-between' for the *Ridge Racer* team and all R&D," says Jerry. "When teams had

» Jerry Momoda was Namco's US product manager for *Ridge Racer*, *Ridge Racer 2* and *Rave Racer*.

» Former Namco US marketing director Mike Fischer's credits include *Ridge Racer Type 4* and *Ridge Racer V*.

» During his time at Namco US, localisation producer Ryota Toyama worked on *Ridge Racer 6* and *7*.

» [Arcade] The day/night cycles in *Ridge Racer* distinguish it from contemporary arcade racing games.

» [Arcade] The helicopters swooping over the tracks in *Ridge Racer 2* are a series standard.

questions and needs, he did the translation. Each morning my day began with faxes from Kohei, and I answered them during my day, which was their night. At about 6pm I would get a phone call from Kohei to discuss new and urgent matters. It was a long day, but I enjoyed my work. Back then, and before having years to reflect on the arc of the series, I would ask for additions and changes to add depth and replay value, as I felt *Ridge Racer* was a bit limited in track offerings to compete with *Virtua Racing*."

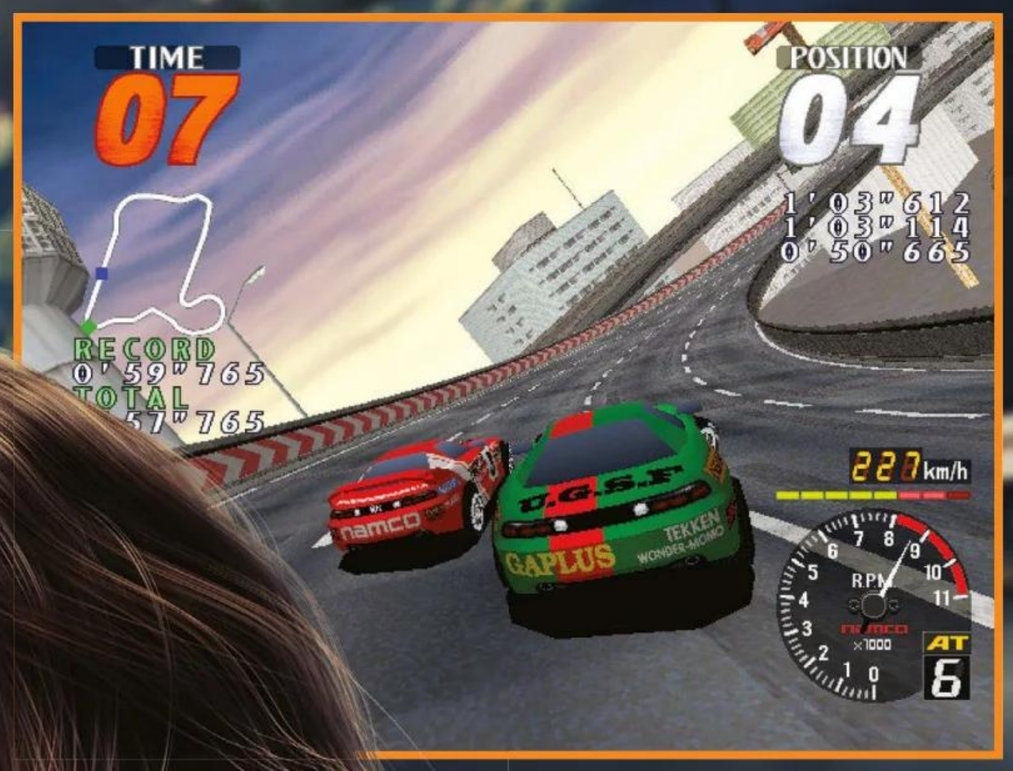
The game that Jerry was watching come to fruition incorporated an excited announcer, an animated intro complete with a glamorous race queen, and a news helicopter flying over races. It also boasted an impossibly sunny world that seamlessly incorporated urban, mountainous and coastal areas. It looked like a cinematographer's daydream, which made perfect sense to Jerry. "The chairman and founder of Namco, Mr Nakayama, was *really* into movies and the film industry, and back in the day Namco owned a movie studio," Jerry reveals. "I think this passion influenced the look and feel of Namco's games. *Ridge Racer*'s setting was fictitious. It was partially based on driving in mountainous areas, which was popular at that time in Japan. Sega's successful *Out Run* and *Virtua Racing* were also set in non-race circuit environments."

» [Arcade] One of the most obvious innovations in *Ridge Racer 2* is its very useful rear-view mirror.

Whatever its inspirations, *Ridge Racer* proved to be an unqualified success when it debuted in arcades in 1993. The Japanese trend it channelled of drifting sports cars around winding mountain roads had a global appeal, and the game's cutting-edge visuals wowed players. A sequel was soon put into production, and while *Ridge Racer 2* had a few aesthetic and gameplay-related enhancements, the main effort of its developers went into making it a multiplayer, multi-cabinet version of the original game. "Linking cabinets together to allow multiplayer races was a *big* step for the series," Jerry explains. "Sega already had a linked *Virtua Racing*, so Namco had to match that to stay competitive. Plus, if every location linked two units it would double the number of units sold. Sega was a little bit ahead technology-wise, and Namco was playing catch-up. Back then, the rivalry between Namco and Sega was at its peak. Though secretive in what they were working on, each seemed to know what games the other was making. This rivalry pushed each company to outperform the other with each new game. I believe this competition made each company's games better." An invaluable new feature in *Ridge Racer 2* was the rear-view mirror in the player's car. In the original game, AI rivals could sneak up on players and overtake without giving any notice, but in the follow-up players could spot them approaching from behind and block their way past. So although the addition of a rear-view mirror was minor in terms of differentiating the sequel's aesthetics from the original game's, it gave the races in *Ridge Racer 2* more strategy than *Ridge Racer*'s. "I recall seeing the rear-view mirror for the first time and being impressed, as I knew the team had severe time, memory and processing constraints," Jerry remarks. "There were so many tradeoffs and priorities the team had to consider. Remember that during that time new achievements in technology were happening at a fast clip, so it was exciting to hear and see new achievements as they happened. Each of these things was a learned skill. It wasn't like patching in existing code for a rear-view mirror."

Arcade goers responded enthusiastically to *Ridge Racer 2*'s innovations on its release in 1994, with the prospect of racing up to seven other people being a major draw. As had happened with the original, the popularity of *Ridge Racer 2* ensured that the series continued. The next *Ridge Racer* title, *Rave Racer*, had better graphics than its predecessor, and it

» [Arcade] Unlike its predecessors, *Rave Racer* has rolling hills that cars can fly over at speed.



» [Arcade] *Rave Racer*'s external view of the player's car was first seen in the PlayStation port of *Ridge Racer*.

"LINKING CABINETS TOGETHER TO ALLOW MULTIPLAYER RACES WAS A BIG STEP. SEGA ALREADY HAD A LINKED VIRTUA RACING, SO NAMCO HAD TO MATCH THAT"

JERRY MOMODA

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: NOTABLE SPIN-OFFS (1995-1996)

HIGH-OCTANE OFFSHOOTS FROM THE CORE SERIES

RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION

As well as three new courses, *Ridge Racer Revolution* has a rear-view mirror option like *Ridge Racer 2* and an outside-of-the-car option like Namco's *Ridge Racer* port. There's also a two-player link cable mode, secret unlockable cars and a cool hidden mode where you race beach buggy-like toy cars.

RAGE RACER

As a concession to realism, *Rage Racer* is depicted in darker hues than earlier titles in the series. It also has a credit system, where your winnings let you pay for upgrades and better cars. Progress through the game's five classes of events requires top-three finishes in each one.

POCKET RACER

A coin-op version of *Ridge Racer Revolution*'s Buggy Mode, except that *Pocket Racer* makes allowances for its young target audience. Your buggy bounces off roadsides without losing speed, and rivals spin out when you hit them and slow down after passing you, so it's easy to catch up.

» [PlayStation] You can speed around tight bends with the grip-type cars in *Ridge Racer Type 4*.

allowed players a choice of which car they raced in for the first time in the series. Another arcade first was that they could select an external view of their vehicle as well as an internal one, and *Rave Racer* had two new tracks in addition to nicer-looking versions of the earlier games' courses. Although seemingly incremental in nature, these changes required great effort on the part of the *Ridge Racer* team. This was reinforced for Jerry when he visited Japan, but it was quite simply the price of keeping the series competitive. "Part of my job was being the voice of the player, so I was always reviewing our competitors' games against what Namco was offering," Jerry notes. "I knew the team knew better than I did about what Sega was doing, but I conveyed what I observed and learned from talking to US players on location. Fortunately I got to see games in development when visiting R&D in Japan, so I had a real appreciation for what they were doing, and the time and effort that it took. They used to spend *crazy* hours at the office. It wasn't uncommon for teams to sleep at work during crunch times."

One aspect of *Rave Racer* remained true to the earlier *Ridge Racer* titles, in that its developers gave its new tracks urban and mountainous settings, a choice Jerry partially puts down to the Nineties Japanese trend that was the focus and appeal of the *Ridge Racer* series. "They kept the mountain tracks because of the fascination at the time with drifting and driving sports cars through mountains along windy roads," Jerry points out. "Also, there

STAGES OF EVOLUTION:
NOTABLE SPIN-OFFS (2000-2004)

COOL GAMES FROM THE RIDGE RACER FRANCHISE

RIDGE RACER 64

In addition to recreating the courses in *Ridge Racer* and *Ridge Racer Revolution*, *Ridge Racer 64* has a unique set of desert tracks and an additional track that incorporates city and bay area environments. The N64 title also has a multiplayer split-screen mode for up to four players.

R: RACING EVOLUTION

As well as having licensed cars instead of fictional models, *R: Racing Evolution* includes a story mode with cutscenes. Tying into this approach is a Pressure Meter that fills up as you get near to competitors, which can cause them to hurl abuse and even lose control of their car.

RIDGE RACER

Although the PSP's *Ridge Racer* predominantly consists of tracks, cars and music from earlier titles, those courses and vehicles are visually enhanced, and the tunes are remixed. One entirely new feature is that drifting gradually fills Nitrous tanks, that when full, allow you to use a Nitrous Boost.

» [PlayStation] Depending on the team you join in *Ridge Racer Type 4*, third place may be viewed as a failure.

was limited graphics processing power, so environmental choices were probably as much a technical concern as an artistic one."

When it was released in 1995, *Rave Racer* went down well with gamers, especially in Japan where it became the highest-grossing dedicated arcade cabinet of 1996. But despite this popularity, its successor was developed for consoles rather than as a coin-op. This process had begun in 1994 when a conversion of *Ridge Racer* helped launch the PlayStation. Then in 1995 and 1996 the Sony system received *Ridge Racer Revolution* and *Rage Racer*, which adapted various aspects of *Ridge Racer 2* and *Rave Racer*. However, Namco's follow-up was the entirely original *Ridge Racer Type 4*, and it had serious competition in the console space, as former Namco US marketing director Mike Fischer remembers. "I joined Namco right as it was getting ready for the final stages of shipping the third *Ridge Racer* console title, but I was much more hands-on with *R4*," Mike recollects. "It was a magical time to be at Namco. I think there was always a special place in Sony's heart for *Ridge Racer*, so partnering with them was really wonderful, but we had a little bit of an identity crisis. We were trying to figure out what our game meant to users in a world where *Gran Turismo* was so large scale, so realistic and so beautiful that really nothing could compete. So there were all kinds of crazy features in *R4*. You could connect two PlayStations with a cable, and the two-player split-screen became four-player split-screen. You could even connect a second controller and use it as a gas pedal by stepping on one of the buttons. We also brought out the Jogcon, and the hardcore fans loved that."

As well as novelty, *Ridge Racer Type 4* had longevity thanks to a narrative-driven Career Mode, which challenged players to race for different teams with very different expectations of their drivers. Further replay value was ensured by the sequel's vast number of cars, which were unlocked gradually by driving for each of the game's rival teams. "I was all for adding in the story modes to *R4* and beefing it up," Mike enthuses. "It made the game more replayable and it meant it would take people longer to play. So as a consumer products marketer I was very happy. Again, we were trying to compete more with *Gran Turismo* head-to-head. It often took us in different directions in terms of player experience, and I was thrilled to do that. There was an enormous amount of depth to *R4*, but at its heart it was an arcade game. So by making it such a rich, deep experience the developers really created a lot of added value." ▶

"I WAS ALL FOR ADDING IN THE STORY MODES TO R4. IT MADE THE GAME MORE REPLAYABLE AND IT MEANT IT WOULD TAKE PEOPLE LONGER TO PLAY"

MIKE FISCHER

» [PlayStation] The drift-type cars in *Ridge Racer Type 4* are ideal for meandering s-bends.

*Mode : Comment
*Message
Welcome... Let me start by making one thing clear. RIS is a team for the chosen few.
Directional Buttons : Select
O Button : O.K.
X Button :

Another aspect of the sequel that added value was the high profile that the game gave to its fictional race girl Reiko Nagase. But despite featuring heavily in the game's marketing and gaining a cult following after the game's successful 1998 release, it was decided that Reiko should be replaced for the follow-up *Ridge Racer V*. However, this didn't entirely go to plan. "In *Ridge Racer V* we changed to a new race girl, and the Japanese team sent us all kinds of incredible concept art," Mike comments. "It was beautifully rendered CG art, but then at some point we got this urgent midnight phone call telling us to stop everything, not to release any art and to not let anyone see it. What had happened was that her necklace was modelled off a real piece of Tiffany jewellery. I don't know if they had been notified by the Tiffany Corporation or if in the course of internal work somebody asked about it, but they had to go back and re-do *all* of her art."

As was the case with *Ridge Racer Type 4*, *Ridge Racer V* had to compete with the latest *Gran Turismo* title, but licensing hundreds of cars like the *Turismo* games wasn't an option. The *Ridge Racer* team's solution was to use this potential set-back to their advantage. "We couldn't have licences to real cars, so we created fictional ones, and as a result we could let those do things that real cars could never do," Mike explains. "They could accelerate better, they could brake better and

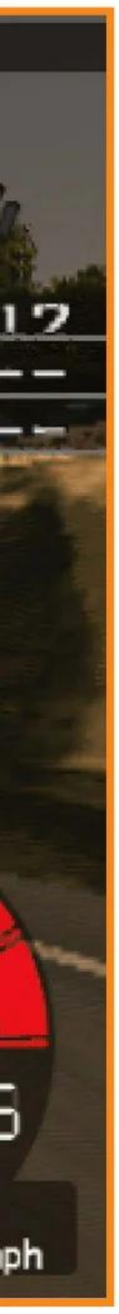
» [PlayStation 2] In *Ridge Racer V*'s Easy Mode it takes a lot less effort to get to the front of the pack. [That's why I always use it – Ed]

» [PlayStation 2] The Time Attack mode in *Ridge Racer V* is a great way to practice the game's courses.

» [PlayStation 2] Despite its relaxing settings, taking first place in *Ridge Racer V* can be an intense challenge.

» [Xbox 360] As well as taking you around bends, drifting gets you Nitrous Oxide in *Ridge Racer 6*.

» [Xbox 360] The illuminated tunnels in *Ridge Racer 6* are common to many titles in the series.



> *"WHILE V MAY NOT HAVE HAD AS BROAD AN APPEAL AS THE ULTIMATE DRIVING SIMULATOR GRAN TURISMO IT OFFERED A VERY UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE"*
>
> **MIKE FISCHER**

they could handle in different ways. So while *V* may not have had as broad an appeal as the ultimate driving simulator *Gran Turismo* it offered a very unique and different experience for a lot of people that just couldn't handle that simulation. So not licensing cars liberated us, we didn't have to make super-realistic car performance. Instead we could give people a thrill far beyond what a simulation could do."

As well as winning plaudits for its points of difference, *Ridge Racer V* was nominated for multiple awards when it came out for the PS2 in early 2000. Later in the year it was adapted for arcades, where it was renamed *Ridge Racer V: Arcade Battle*. Spin-off *Ridge Racer* titles in the form of *R: Racing Evolution*, *Ridge Racer* (PSP) and *Ridge Racer DS* followed in 2003 and 2004, and then the core series continued with *Ridge Racer 6*. Besides differentiating itself with fresh features, it also broke with tradition by being an Xbox 360 exclusive launch title, as former Namco Bandai US localisation producer Ryota Toyama details. "*Ridge Racer* had historically been released on PlayStation as a launch title, so *Ridge Racer 6* was a complete departure from the regular way of doing things," Ryota reviews. "Microsoft was trying to establish the Xbox 360 as the main console in the US, so it was trying to at least have *Ridge Racer 6* be on par with all the previous versions of *Ridge Racer*, and maybe even have more by adding new features. So not just new courses, but also new gameplay modes and stuff – Reiko Nagase was still big back then, and having an HD cutscene with her was something new. So that was some of the feedback I relayed from Microsoft to the dev team."

Other major new features introduced in *Ridge Racer 6* included its non-linear structure, where players entered races marked on a map with the aim of unlocking adjacent races. There were also No-Nitrous events, where winning depended purely on racing skill, although these weren't compulsory. "A lot of Japanese games had linear progression, but people were starting to say they needed more freedom," Ryota observes. "So I think the branched structure was the team's effort in adding some choice for the player in ▶

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: NOTABLE SPIN-OFFS (2004-2006)

TAKE THESE RIDGE RACER TITLES FOR A SPIN

RIDGE RACER DS

In many ways, *Ridge Racer DS* is a nicer-looking version of *Ridge Racer 64*, but it differs from the N64 title in some respects. First and foremost are the DS game's touch-screen controls and wireless multiplayer, but more interestingly it includes new Namco and Nintendo-themed cars.

CRITICAL VELOCITY

Imagine *Ridge Racer* meets *Chase HQ* and you have a good idea of what *Critical Velocity* is all about. As it was developed by the PSP *Ridge Racer* team it's unsurprising that *Critical Velocity* features a car commonly featured in the *Ridge Racer* games in the form of the Soldat Crinale.

RIDGE RACER 2

Taking the approach that bigger is better, *Ridge Racer 2* retains all 12 tracks of its PSP predecessor, and adds nine more drawn from the series' past. It also has 62 cars to its predecessor's 17, and it boasts new racing events like Survival Mode, where trailing cars are disqualified.

» [Xbox 360] You can trigger a Nitrous Boost in *Ridge Racer 6* when you fill one of your car's NO2 tanks.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION:

NOTABLE SPIN-OFFS (2009-2011)

ESSENTIAL ON-THE-GO RIDGE RACER EXPERIENCES

RIDGE RACER ACCELERATED

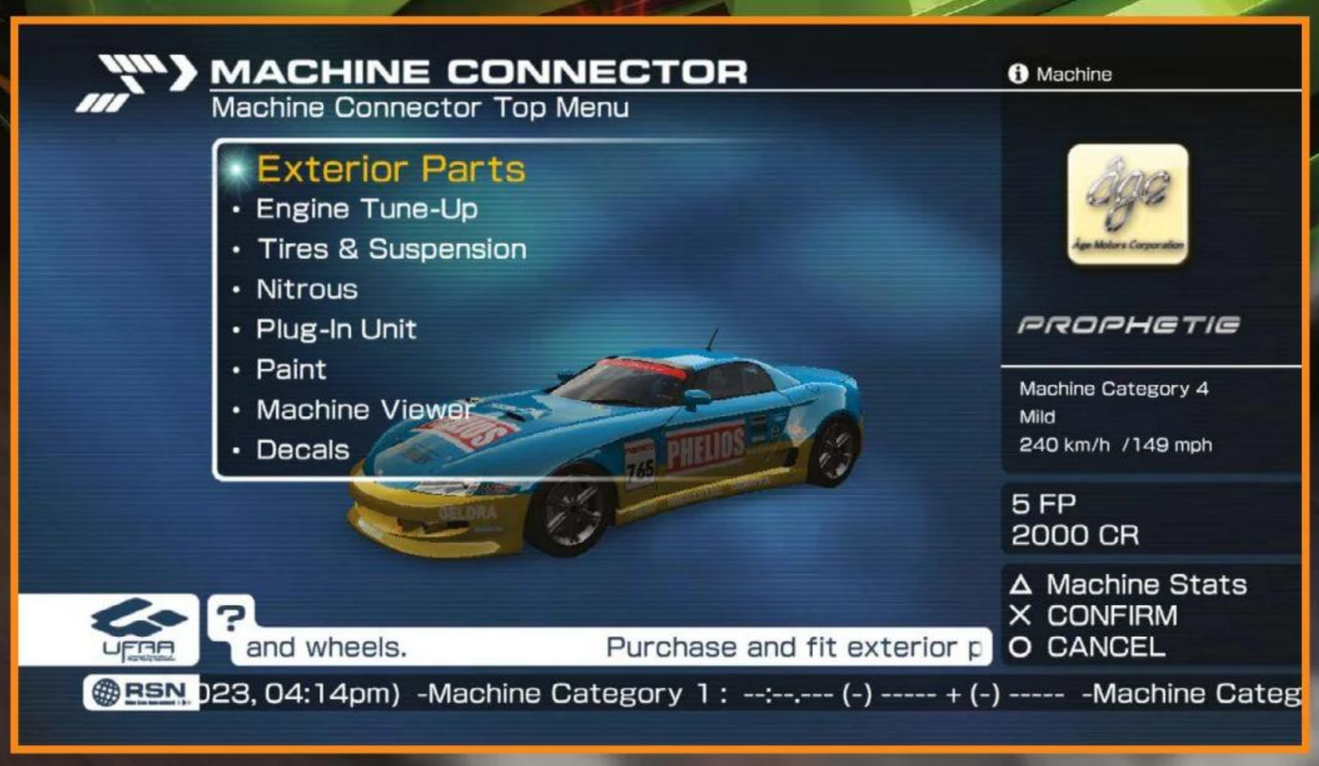
Essentially, *Ridge Racer Accelerated* is a mobile iteration of the PSP *Ridge Racer 2*, although it has fewer courses and cars. Where it differs more is with the way you control your car, with options including tilting your device, using on-screen buttons and manipulating a slider bar.

RIDGE RACER DRIFT

Considering *Ridge Racer Drift* runs on Java, it's impressive how much of the *Ridge Racer* experience the game retains. There's a genuine sense of speed, convincing drifting and Nitrous-fuelled bursts of speed. *Ridge Racer Drift* even looks the part, despite it mainly being sprite based.

RIDGE RACER 3D

Aside from being depicted in 3D, this 3DS exclusive offers a number of other firsts. It has six new modes, including One-Make Race, where you race against a field of opponents driving the same type of car as you. The game also offers different levels of drift, from mild to dynamic.



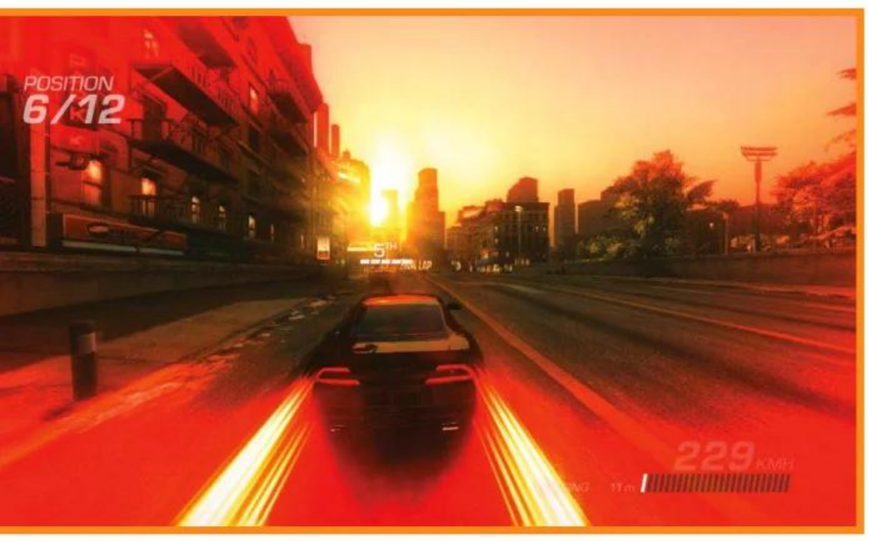
» [PlayStation 3] Unlike earlier games in the series, you can customise the cars in *Ridge Racer 7*.

» [PlayStation 3] Tailing rivals in *Ridge Racer 7* produces slipstream that cuts wind resistance and increases your acceleration.

▶ how they played the game. We also needed to add some depth by adding different modes and difficulties, to make sure people could continue playing the game for a long time – so I wasn't complaining about players not being able to use Nitrous in some races! The *Ridge Racer* series had been easy to play, and that was popular in Japan. However, US gamers wanted to keep trying until they succeeded, and they would want that from *Ridge Racer 6*. So we were trying to figure out a balance."

In 2005's crowded field of Xbox 360 racers, *Ridge Racer 6* did well to distinguish itself from its rivals, however its follow-up *Ridge Racer 7* returned to the PlayStation line as a launch title for the PS3. Slipstreaming was introduced, which made blocking cars behind you as players had in the earlier games redundant, and strategy was added to how players gained Nitrous. "In the earlier *Ridge Racer* games, it was all about trying not to bump into the walls and then using your Nitrous at the correct time," Ryota assesses. "The blocking in the early games was funny, because that was a big strategy at the time! But slipstreaming actually added a little bit *more* strategy into your racing, so you weren't just simply using Nitrous but you were using your opponents to your advantage. Then I think having to drift *more* to get Nitrous appealed to many players out there. In a sense it made things a little easier in terms of winning the

» [PlayStation 3] As with many later *Ridge Racer* games, *Ridge Racer 7* is notable for its novel car designs.



» [PC] Uniquely for the series, ramming other cars is rewarded in *Ridge Racer Unbounded*.

» [PC] One of the many modes in *Ridge Racer Unbounded* is a test of your drifting abilities.

races, but rushing through the corners with the perfect drift was the definition of *Ridge Racer*, so I think it worked well."

These gameplay innovations aside, *Ridge Racer 7* also tapped into a trend for urban races, where drivers would personalise every aspect of their cars. "We knew that street racing and customisation was a big thing," Ryota says. "So we did adopt that into *Ridge Racer 7*, but we didn't want to overdo it, because it would pull the series away from what it was supposed to be. In that sense, the customisation wasn't as robust as in other games out there, which I think might have been a good thing. Otherwise it would have lost its identity as a *Ridge Racer* game."

This last point wasn't lost on impressed critics and players, and their appreciation was reflected in *Ridge Racer 7* winning an award for being the best PS3 racing game of 2006. No less than eight *Ridge Racer* games have appeared since, although there haven't been any more core titles. 2012's *Ridge Racer Unbounded* qualified for some due to having some late-on participation from the Tokyo-based *Ridge Racer* team, but the superlative combat racer wasn't originally a *Ridge Racer* game and was far more the work of the Finnish developer Bugbear. Indeed, *Unbounded* proved to be quite the divisive title on release as its focus on aggressive driving and destructive environments meant it shared more in common with the likes of *Burnout* and Bugbear's own *Flatout* series than Namco's own series, and yet it remains a lot of fun when you take it on its own merits.

"SLIPSTREAMING ADDED A LITTLE BIT MORE STRATEGY INTO YOUR RACING, SO YOU WEREN'T JUST USING NITROUS BUT YOU WERE USING YOUR OPPONENTS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE"

RYOTA TOYAMA

This lack of new core titles in the long-running series is something Ryota feels strongly about. "It's sad that we haven't seen any new *Ridge Racer* games recently," Ryota sighs. "Maybe it's because *Ridge Racer* was an arcade-style game, and nowadays even in Japan we don't have as many arcades as we had before. I think the culture has just shifted."

The way that former Namco US product manager Jerry Momoda views the original *Ridge Racer* is celebratory by comparison. His memories of the game that convinced him to join Namco US are of good times, and he's ideally suited to explain the enduring popularity of Namco's series. "I look back at *Ridge Racer* in a nostalgic way, when I see it now I think about what I was doing at the time," Jerry beams. "I still play racing games and I still love them. I also still appreciate what *Ridge Racer* is. The fact that you keep coming back to play it is the secret sauce of arcade videogames." ✱

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: NOTABLE SPIN-OFFS (2011-2016)

INTERESTING TAKES ON THE RIDGE RACER FORMULA

RIDGE RACER

It got some stick for relying on DLC, but once you have that the PS Vita *Ridge Racer* has a lot going for it. There's a good feel to the driving, drifting, Nitrous boosting and slipstreaming, and its core objective of finishing in top positions to unlock upgrades is a great incentive.

RIDGE RACER SLIPSTREAM

The name *Ridge Racer Slipstream* refers to the title's focus on slipstreaming, where you tail opponents to reduce wind resistance and boost acceleration. It works like in the earlier games, but the effect is far greater, and it can be the difference between winning and losing races.

RIDGE RACER DRAW & DRIFT

You draw routes around *Ridge Racer Draw & Drift*'s courses on the touch-screen pre-race – the faster you draw, the faster you drive in the races. These involve tapping the screen to drift when your car hits drift zones of various widths, with accurate taps being rewarded with Nitrous.

ESSENTIAL GAME

Cat Trax

Although *Cat Trax* appears to be a simple *Pac-Man* clone at first glance, it does manage to offer some features from other games that elevate it a bit. The set-up is that you're a cat evading dogs while trying to get all the catnip, and you can transform into a dog-catching truck by eating fish. What distinguishes *Cat Trax* is the ability to open and close gates to rearrange the maze, as well as your ability to warp the cat out of trouble *Asteroids*-style.

Arcadia 2001 fact

■ The most notable Arcadia variant is Japan's Bandai Arcadia, which received the recognisable licensed games *Doraemon*, *Dr Slump*, *Mobile Suit Gundam* and *Super Dimension Fortress Macross*.

PROCESSOR: 8-BIT SIGNETICS 2650 CPU (3.58 MHZ),

GRAPHICS: SIGNETICS 2637 (128X208 RESOLUTION, EIGHT COLOURS, FOUR HARDWARE SPRITES)

STORAGE: ROM CARTRIDGE (UP TO 8KB)

AUDIO: ONE BEEPER CHANNEL, ONE NOISE CHANNEL

MEMORY: 512 BYTES RAM

Arcadia 2001

» **MANUFACTURER:** Emerson Radio » **YEAR:** 1982
» **COST:** $199 (launch), £155+ (today, boxed), £110+ (today, unboxed)

Though it might not be the most familiar brand internationally, Emerson Radio has successfully sold all manner of electronics in the USA for decades now – a range that today includes microwaves, TVs and clock radios. Back in the Eighties, the company was enticed into joining the rapidly expanding videogame market, and put together a console based around a pairing of the Signetics 2650 CPU and 2637 video controller – both off-the-shelf parts.

The console found itself awkwardly positioned in the market – it couldn't compete for power with other new machines like the Atari 5200, ColecoVision and Vectrex, nor could it offer the wide range of games that the likes of the Atari 2600 and Intellivision could. What's more, it didn't have much in the way of recognisable software, offering mostly clones of arcade hits and occasional officially licensed versions of lesser-known arcade games like Konami's *Jungler*. The system spawned many clones, such as the Hanimex Home Arcade in Europe, but didn't last long in the face of a major market crash. *

SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

Minority Report

INTERESTING GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED

COMMODORE 16

With it being issue 264, it seemed only fitting that we should turn our attention to the Commodore 264 range, and in particular the lesser-known hits for the intriguingly imperfect Commodore 16

Words by Martyn Carroll

» [C16] These collapsible floors and quirky enemies point to *Manic Miner* being an influence on the game.

» [C16] If you can't find a handy ladder, the springs do an equally good job of propelling Tom upwards.

TOM THUMB

■ DEVELOPER: **UDO GERTZ** ■ YEAR: **1985**

■ **The Commodore 16 was hamstrung from the start.** Compared to the Commodore 64, it lacked hardware sprites and the SID sound chip. But its key limitation was memory, or lack of, shipping with just 16Kb. The computer was designed to compete with low-cost micros like the ZX Spectrum, but by the time it launched in 1984, even Sinclair understood that 16Kb was not enough. The C16's sibling, the Plus/4, did come with 64Kb, and it was possible to purchase third-party RAM packs that would boost the C16's memory to 32 or 64Kb, but software publishers understandably targeted the largest possible userbase, meaning most games were designed to run inside 16Kb. This ceiling limited the kinds of games available. Simplicity was the order of the day, and single-screen shooters and text-only adventures were prevalent. But with the release of *Tom Thumb*, German programmer Udo Gertz proved that 16Kb was plenty.

Initially the game looks like a rather crude platformer with rudimentary graphics. Sound-wise, a gloomy tune plays as you start to explore. But it quickly becomes clear that *Tom Thumb* is no one-screen wonder. Maze-like passages spread out before you and you'll soon encounter keys which unlock doors that open up even more of this labyrinthine pyramid. It turns out there are 178 screens standing between tiny Tom and the exit. 178! And it's not flip-screen either – the game scrolls smoothly in multiple directions. Furthermore, this isn't a big old empty game where all the memory has gone on the map. The pyramid is alive with nasties and traps just waiting to claim Tom's five lives. Perhaps the one negative is the presence of what we call the '*Frogger* experience', where, like in Konami's arcade classic, literally every single thing you touch kills you. Even the pretty little flowers are deadly. But the need to persevere (which means mastering Tom's odd jumping style) and explore the game's deepest reaches is strong.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

HUNCHBACK
CENTURY ELECTRONICS, 1983

■ Rescue Esmeralda by guiding Quasimodo along the castle wall, avoiding fiery pits, deadly arrows and little men with spikes (who would inspire an enemy in *Tom Thumb*). The coin-op was converted to squillions of systems but sadly not the C16.

RICK DANGEROUS
CORE DESIGN, 1989

■ When it comes to exploring tombs laden with traps, we feel that nothing will ever top Rick's debut outing. It's frustrating and fantastic in equal measure. Of note: the Egypt stage bears more than a passing resemblance to *Tom Thumb*.

DIGGER T ROCK
RARE, 1991

■ An early Rare success for the NES, where you explore eight expansive caverns in search of a legendary lost city. As you'd expect from Rare, the game is dripping with charm, and the cute title character really deserved another outing.

The same can't be said about the C64 version, which was also developed by Gertz at the same time. That version is even bigger, featuring six different pyramids, but it just lacks the playability and polish of the C16 release, and is therefore one of the few games where the C16 outfoxes the C64 (turn the page to discover some more). Gertz was clearly more at home on the baby Commodore, pushing the limits of the hardware and battling against the lack of memory. With this and his subsequent releases – specifically the two sports titles, *Winter Events* and *Summer Events* – he would become something of a legend on the 264 scene, showing that limited hardware and 16Kb was no barrier to success.

IN DEPTH

TREASURE HUNT
■ Your objective is not to merely stay alive, but to steal as many of the pharaoh's treasure chests as you can.

KEY TO ESCAPE
■ There are 26 keys scattered around the place. You'll need to collect them all to open the doors and escape the pyramid.

TUMBLING TOM
■ If you're wondering how to access the upper levels, here's your answer. The springs will send you skywards if you jump on them.

FIRE TRAP
■ The flames are just one of many lethal traps you'll encounter. Wait for them to phase out for a second and then dash past.

Minority Report

ACE

■ DEVELOPER: **IAN MARTIN** ■ YEAR: **1985**

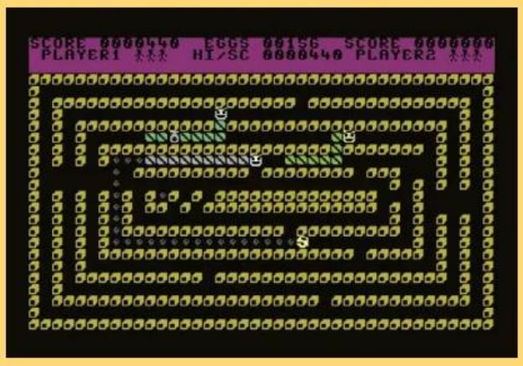
■ **This is one of those rare examples where less can sometimes be more.** Most readers will remember *Ace*, Cascade's excellent air combat simulator that soared on the C64. That version was later ported over to the Plus/4, digitised speech and all, and some would say it was even better than the source. However, the game actually began life on the VIC-20 and C16.

The C16 version is a comparatively simple affair, with just one type of mission – aerial battles with enemy aircraft. There is no takeoff and landing, no mid-air refuelling, no land or sea targets – basically everything that made the 64Kb version cool is missing. And yet if you'd just watched *Iron Eagle* on video, and you wanted to blast some bogeys without worrying about takeoff velocity and how to lift your undercarriage, the 16Kb version was perfect. The forced limitations mean that it's more of a fun arcade-style dogfight than a flight simulator. Plus, there are four separate skill levels, so it still presents a decent challenge for wannabe Doug Masters out there. If you're looking for more depth, you could always upgrade your machine's memory and play the Plus/4 version instead. This would also give you access to the two-player, head-to-head follow-up, *Ace 2*.

» [C16] Line up the enemy in your sites and fire off a heat-seeking missile. Textbook.

» [C16] The red-coloured aircraft on the higher skill levels are not so easily downed.

MORE GAMES TO PLAY



» SQUIRM

■ DEVELOPER: **TONY KELLY**
■ YEAR: **1985**

■ Mastertronic was one publisher that enjoyed success on the C16, with many of its games achieving enviable sales. This budget gem plays like several golden era arcade games mashed together. Predominantly it's a spin on *Pac-Man*, where you have to chase the queen worm around the maze, eating its eggs (the grey dots) while avoiding the deadly worker worms.

» THE MAGICIAN'S CURSE

■ DEVELOPER: **MARK J MOORE**
■ YEAR: **1986**

■ Gremlin Graphics was another notable supporter of the C16, releasing dozens of games for the format, including several exclusives like this one. This is a smart graphic adventure where, like *Tom Thumb*, you wonder how the author managed to squeeze so much into 16Kb. Better still, the presence of simple object-based puzzles elevates it above standard platforming fare.

» MONTY ON THE RUN

■ DEVELOPER: **JASON PERKINS**
■ YEAR: **1986**

■ This is a pared-back port of the C64 classic, featuring 30 rooms instead of the standard 49. What's interesting here is that it does away with the frankly ridiculous Freedom Kit game of chance from the original. The result is a more standard platformer, where the aims are to explore, collect coins and have fun. The only thing missing is Rob Hubbard's famous theme tune.

» KIKSTART

■ DEVELOPER: **SHAUN SOUTHERN**
■ YEAR: **1986**

■ This is completely different to the C64 and Atari 8-bit versions, being a clone of the Century coin-op *Superbike*. Instead of racing a rival, you have to complete the courses within the (too tight) time limit while popping balloons for bonuses. Brutally difficult in places, but you'll be compelled to complete the 16 courses in this two-wheeled winner from Shaun 'Sout' Southern.

VOIDRUNNER

■ DEVELOPER: **JEFF MINTER** ■ YEAR: **1987**

■ **The C16's limited memory saw developers look back at the VIC-20 and replicate the kind of games that worked well on that system.** This naturally led them to Llamasoft and there were several blatant Minter clones released, including *Xelien* (a copy of *Abductor*) and *Hunter* (a rip-off of *Gridrunner*). Official Llamasoft titles *Matrix* and *Laserzone* were released for the C16, but these conversions were handled by Jeff's friend Aaron Liddiment.

The lure of the system's 121-colours finally convinced Jeff to write a new shooter for the system and this is the result. Despite being the third entry in his *Gridrunner* series, this is not a tepid rehash. You now control four ships, rather than just one, and sometimes they will fire in different directions, not just upwards. Each stage twists the classic formula and it's a blast to play – especially on the C16 where Jeff uses the machine's expanded palette to create some fantastic visual effects. The C64 version played equally well, but it just doesn't look as... psychedelic. Sealing the deal is *Hellgate*, an update of Jeff's earlier VIC-20 shooter which is included on the flip side of the tape. *Voidrunner* is obviously the main event, but you can't complain at bagging two Llamasoft shooters for the price of one.

» [C16] As shooters go, *Voidrunner* is as busy as hell; a real assault on the senses

» [C16] In this stage, the four ships join to form a four-way firing ring of death.

RETRO STINKER

» GREEN BERET

■ OCEAN ■ 1986

■ **Not just the worst conversion of *Green Beret*,** or even the worst game available for the C16, but probably the worst commercial game ever released.

» ZAGAN WARRIOR

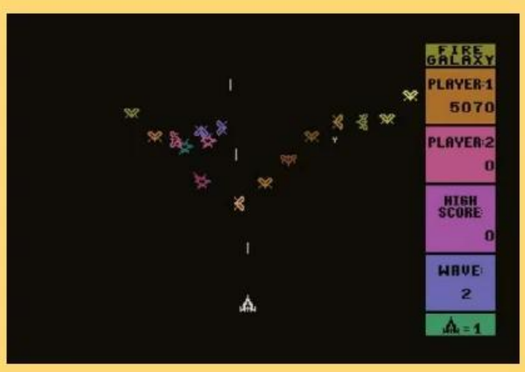
■ DEVELOPER: **JOHN AIREY**
■ YEAR: **1986**

■ The author here clearly looked at what games worked well on the 16K Spectrum and decided to replicate the all-time classic *Deathchase*. Yes, it's a blatant copy, but it does the 3D-through-a-forest thing really well, and expands on the original by giving you more targets. Along similar lines, see *Leaper*, a copy of *Jumping Jack*, also published by Bug-Byte.

» LEGIONNAIRE

■ DEVELOPER: **JORG DIERKS**
■ YEAR: **1986**

■ Run-and-gun games were left wanting on the C16. The official *Commando* conversion was terrible and the rip-off *Who Dares Wins II* wasn't much cop either. However, this Kingsoft release showed that the machine was perfectly capable of running vertically scrolling shooters – and with seven areas to rush, it wasn't short on content. It was followed by an equally strong sequel.



» FIRE GALAXY

■ DEVELOPER: **HENRIK WENING**
■ YEAR: **1987**

■ If you were looking for a straight-up shooter in the *Galaxian/Galaga* mould then Kingsoft had you covered. Despite the system's lack of hardware sprites, the game throws waves of colourful invaders at you and it quickly becomes frantic – especially if you choose the Fast Game option. This is one of the best high-score challenges available for the C16.

» SUMMER EVENTS

■ DEVELOPER: **UDO GERTZ**
■ YEAR: **1987**

■ Another Udo Gertz creation, this was Kingsoft's answer to Epyx's *Summer Games* and it's perhaps the most polished title ever released for the C16 during its commercial lifetime. Featuring seven events, it's naturally a multi-load so it plays better on disk than tape, but whatever the format, it's still a must-own title for C16 owners. *Winter Events* is also recommended.

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Wonder Boy In Monster Land

NOT LIKE THIS

RETROREVIVAL

» MASTER SYSTEM » 1988 » SEGA R&D2

My mum has this really annoying habit of turning plugs off whenever she goes to bed or stops using something. Standby doesn't exist in my mum's world – you turn something off by the wall, because that way you know you've turned it off properly.

When I was in my late teens and still living at home, she'd regularly turn off the heat mat to my Chinese water dragon's vivarium, which meant I often came home from work to find him in a torpid state (luckily, bathing him in some warm water usually did the trick and revived him). Sadly, once I started dating my future wife Melanie, my home visits were a lot less regular, which led to a situation that no amount of warm baths would remedy.

That wasn't the only time my energy-saving mother caused something to accidentally die, so let's travel back four years earlier to the release of *Monster Boy In Monster Land* on the Master System. I was a huge fan of the original game so buying the sequel was a no-brainer. It was excellent as well, greatly expanding on the arcade-like nature of the original by introducing RPG elements and many more bosses to battle.

There's a fantastic sense of progression in this Master System sequel and while it's not quite as expansive as the later *The Dragon's Trap*, it still feels like you're embarking on an epic quest. There are NPCs to interact with, hidden locations to discover and plenty of enemies to fight, it really is a cracking conversion.

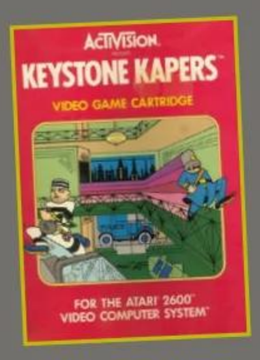
Monster Land is a fairly big game as well and I was making liberal use of the Master System's pause button. I imagine you can guess where this is going… I was one level from completing the game and couldn't resist the call of nature. In the time I'd paused the game, visited the bathroom and returned to my bedroom the damage had been done. I returned to a blank screen and a call from my energy-efficient mother, "Stop leaving your stuff on, Darran." Thank goodness the Switch's *Wonder Boy Anniversary Collection* includes save states.

THE MAKING OF

KEYSTONE KAPERS

IN CREATING HIS CLASSIC CRAZY CAPER INSPIRED BY THE KEYSTONE KOPS AND DONKEY KONG, GARRY KITCHEN STOLE THE HEARTS OF GAMERS, SEIZED THEIR ATTENTION AND MADE THEM CHUCKLE WITH A FUN TAKE ON A CHAOTIC COPS AND ROBBERS CHASE

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES



IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** ACTIVISION
- **PLATFORM:** ATARI 2600, VARIOUS
- **RELEASED:** 1983
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM

For many years, Mack Sennett's silent film comedy series *Keystone Kops* inspired many a homage. After emerging in 1912, the hapless fictional policemen supported the likes of Charlie Chaplin, starred in films involving Abbott and Costello and Mel Brooks, and even featured in 1981's *The Muppets Go To The Movies* and episodes of *Sesame Street*.

But their slapstick shenanigans also influenced one of the greatest Atari 2600 games, Garry Kitchen's classic *Keystone Kapers*. Fresh from making *Space Jockey* and a port of *Donkey Kong* for the console, Garry decided to draw upon this most incompetent of police forces. Hence a starring role for Officer Keystone Kelly in a madcap game that saw the character in hot pursuit of "blunderous hoodlum" Harry Hooligan.

» [Atari 2600] When in hot pursuit of Harry, you could feel the adrenaline pumping.

Garry, who joined Activision shortly after completing his *Donkey Kong* adaptation, had been looking to create another game with a small character. "I was predisposed to doing another 'little running man' game and I wanted it to be humorous," he explains. His first step was to identify a character easily recognisable to players. "I have always had a 'rule' that I've followed when developing for the Atari 2600," he continues. "I won't put an object in the game if a player can't immediately tell what it is which, honestly, is a problem with many 2600 games given the console's limited graphics capabilities."

Garry experimented with different characters before landing upon the *Keystone Kapers* theme. "With the iconic 'bowler hat' and billy club, the character was instantly recognisable," he adds. Development of the game effectively grew from there. "With a cop, you have a natural adversary in the crook who, by the way, was also instantly recognisable in his striped prison garb," Garry explains. "So once I had the main characters, what choice did I have but to have the cop chase the crook?"

The premise was to have the officer pursue a thief called Harry Hooligan (aka the Krook) through a department store called Southwick's Emporium in the hope of apprehending him and bringing him to justice. Garry chose a store as the setting because of his love of emulating machinery in games which meant he'd already created an animated escalator. "The existence of the escalator demo drove the design of a store with multiple floors," he says. "It all fit very nicely, I might add. As every game designer knows, sometimes a concept just works." Further development got swiftly underway

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SPACE JOCKEY
PLATFORM: ATARI 2600
RELEASED: 1982

PRESSURE COOKER (PICTURED)
PLATFORM: ATARI 2600
RELEASED: 1983

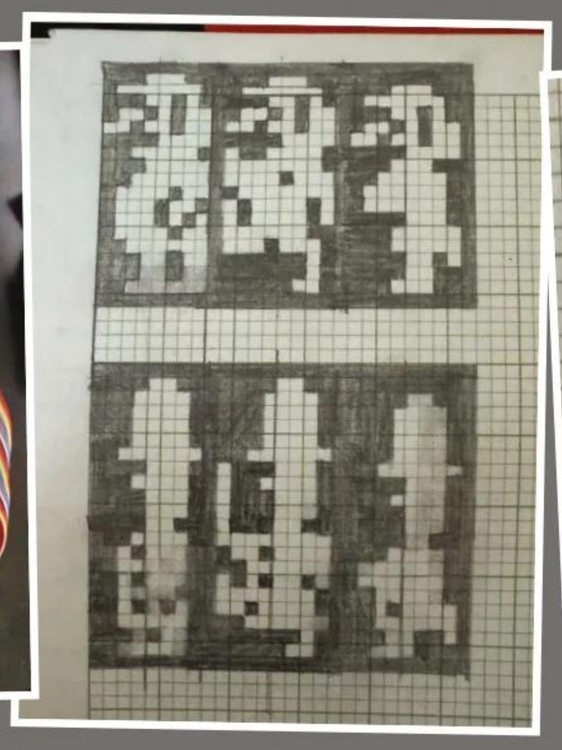
THE SIMPSONS: BART VS. THE SPACE MUTANTS
PLATFORM: NES, VARIOUS
RELEASED: 1991

» Garry Kitchen has worked in the games industry for many decades and is still tinkering with the Atari 2600 today.

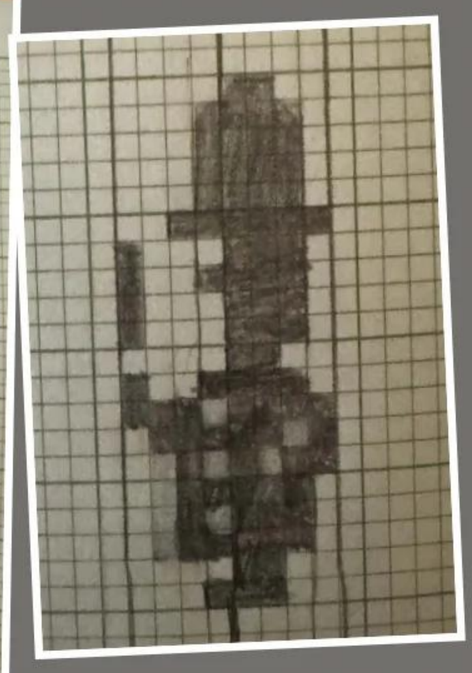
with Garry working from a satellite design office in Glen Rock, New Jersey, some 3,000 miles away from Activision's main hub in Sunnydale, California. Based in a beautiful building adjacent to a huge Nabisco Bakery facility ("It treated us to the wonderful aroma of freshly baked cookies on most days."), the situation suited him well.

After all, Garry had grown up in New Jersey where he and his associates went on to operate a small development studio in the unfinished basement of his tiny house. And, as it happened, the arrangement also suited Activision. "I learned they preferred the idea of spawning another creative office to minimise the chance of screwing up the group synergy of Activision's original creative team," Garry says of David Crane, Bob Whitehead, Alan Miller and Larry Kaplan. Still, one of those four had a big impact on Garry's game.

» Garry created his own Atari 2600 development system which connected to an Apple II and the console's cartridge port.



» A page from Garry's notebook showing animation tests for Jumpman from *Donkey Kong* (which he'd just completed) and the main character in *Keystone Kapers*.



» An early pixel drawing of the character Keystone Kelly to see whether it could be properly represented in an eight-pixel wide dimension.

> "UNLESS YOU'VE CREATED A VIDEOGAME AS A ONE-MAN TEAM, YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH FUN WE HAD"
> GARRY KITCHEN

To produce the new title – codenamed *Cop* – Garry used an Atari 2600 development system he'd devised for the Apple II. It plugged into one of the computer's expansion ports and emulated a 4K ROM. It also connected to a 2600 through the cartridge port and enabled code to be edited and assembled using the Merlin 6502 Assembler application.

Code would be downloaded to the emulator board in seconds and this allowed Garry to quickly see how the game was progressing. "The game originally started as a vertical scroller and the Krook was in the department store, visible through windows while the cop was climbing outside of the building using fire escapes and platforms trying to catch up to the Krook who was attempting to get to the roof to escape," Garry says. "To stop the cop, the Krook was throwing objects from the store out of the window trying to knock the cop off the building." But then David paid a visit.

It was about a month into development and the early vertically scrolling demo version was running. David cut an imposing figure. "It is not hyperbole to state that David was intimidating in 1982. He was nearing the peak of his amazing run of Atari 2600 game releases when he came out to see me and he would quickly become the most acclaimed videogame designer in the industry, with *Pitfall!* about to hit the market."

» [Atari 2600] The elevators and escalators allow access to various floors and you need to quickly figure where Harry will head.

» [Atari 2600] Once Harry is caught, you start again with more obstacles to content with. The aim is to keep going and amass points.

» [Atari 2600] Recovering moneybags and suitcases awards 50 points. You also get increasing numbers of points for each arrest.

KOP A LOAD OF THIS

USEFUL PLAYING TIPS ON BEATING KEYSTONE KAPERS

JUMP OVER THE BALLS

■ In the manual, Garry suggested ducking under the beach balls. Now he says jump. "The bouncing ball gradually bounces higher so enter the screen, hesitate for a split second, then run at the ball, jumping when you reach it. A tiny hesitation synchronises the player's jump with the lowest point on the ball's arc."

LEARN THE RHYTHM

■ As Garry also noted in the manual, there is a rhythm to the obstacles and if you learn them, then you will find tackling them much easier. For the shopping carts, for instance, you need to jump then run two steps and, for the aeroplanes, you'll have to duck and run three steps. Repeat these moves over and over.

PRACTISE PERFECT TIMING

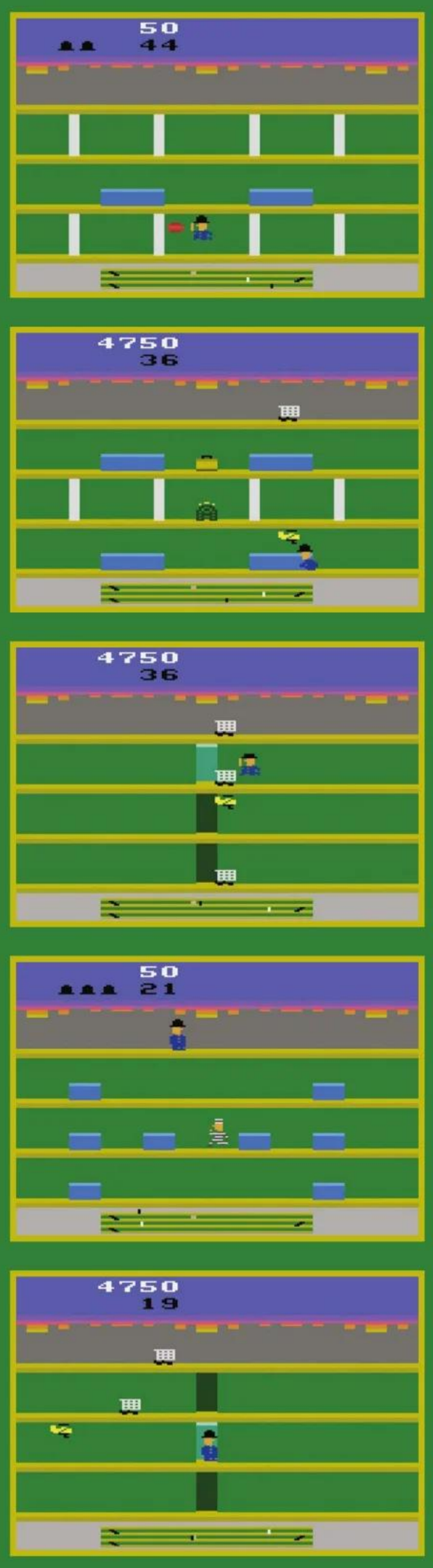
■ It's possible to jump over the shopping cart once per screen. Get it wrong and the cart will wrap around before the player leaves the screen edge, forcing a second jump. "Perfect timing (with no hesitation) allows the player to reach the end of the screen 1/60th of a second before the second cart appears," says Garry.

DON'T GET STUCK

■ Whatever you do, don't get ahead of Harry and race up the roof before him because if you do, then you will find that you can't get down and your foe will escape – there are no staircases or lifts around to rescue you in this situation. To reiterate, only go up to the roof after Harry has gone there.

TIME THE ELEVATORS

■ There are some things to bear in mind. If you're in an elevator and reach the same floor as Harry, he'll change direction. You may also find that you will save a lot of time dashing to an escalator rather than waiting for an elevator. In any case, keep an eye on the radar.



Garry and David had only met once before, during Garry's interview. "But, despite the intimidation factor, we had a great visit, spending a good amount of time talking about *Cop*," Garry says. "The most significant suggestion that David made was to shift the game mechanic from vertical scrolling to horizontal screen-to-screen. We discussed a game that he had in development – *Jungle Runner* – which featured a little running man explorer running through the jungle, and he shared how well the horizontal screen-to-screen gameplay was working."

With the perspective changing, more and more elements were added and yet Garry refrained from formally planning the game. He would come up with a concept, sit at the computer and program. "I made 99% of the design decisions on the fly as I was writing code," he says, explaining how exhilarating he found the process of getting lost in the creative process. "Unless you've created a videogame as a one-man team, responsible for the concept, art, gameplay, backstory, sound effects and (sometimes) music, you can't imagine how much fun we had in those early days of the cartridge videogame business," he adds.

Having a department store as the setting for the game offered what Garry described as "an endless array of options". He chose obstacles on the basis of how recognisable they would be on the screen and that's why the game included bouncing beach balls and a shopping cart. The game also had cathedral radios but Garry admits they were confusing. "This 'out-of-the-blue' choice was a homage to my dad George Kitchen, who collected antique radios and electronics as I was growing up," he says. "Some people had a hard time recognising it, despite the fact that they emitted animated sound waves."

Collisions would knock nine seconds off a timer (the Krook needed to be caught

» [Atari 2600] You lose a life if you run out of time, allow Harry to escape or collide with a biplane. Other obstacles deduct time.

» [Atari 2600] Quickly working out how the obstacles behave allows you to more easily tackle them regardless of how many you encounter.

» [Atari 2600] Those pesky planes will cause you no end of problems, more so as you advance through the game.

within a specific timeframe which Garry says was added to make the game feel more frantic). But fail to duck when a model aeroplane from the toy department flew by – Garry's favourite obstacle – and a life would be lost. In addition, there were moneybags and stolen suitcases to collect and these would give the player 50 points each. There were bonus points based on how fast the Krook was caught too.

"It rewarded skillful play and added to the frenzy that was the hallmark humour of *Keystone Kops*," Garry says. All in all, it created a varied mix of items and ensured that, when in hot pursuit, players needed to be forever on the lookout for problems and reward and engage fast reflexes in order to reach the villain.

The aforementioned escalators were important. Although there were also a number of slow-moving lifts, players soon realised that the escalators were the best way of allowing the chasing character to quickly move from one floor to another. Garry spent many hours ensuring Keystone Kelly could jump onto the moving escalator and land cleanly on the nearest step – he didn't want a clunky landing where the code clicked the character into place when he got close. It's something he remains proud of today. "Because of the amount of effort I put into that code, to this day, if I play *Keystone Kapers*, I always jump onto the escalator just to admire that code," he says. "And, yes, I acknowledge that I am a little strange."

> "I FOUND I GOT BETTER RESULTS IF I WAS LASER-FOCUSSED ON GAMEPLAY"
> GARRY KITCHEN

What makes the game even more admirable is that it was achieved with just 4K of code. "I found I got better results if I was laser-focussed on gameplay without the burden of worrying about ROM size," he says. "Once the gameplay was finalised, I could then focus on reducing the code size without distractions, knowing the feature set was not a moving target." This did mean having to tighten up a 6K binary file but he found "cutting bytes", as he put it, akin to a puzzle and he enjoyed the challenge, even if it did take him a couple of months (one casualty was a fancy title page).

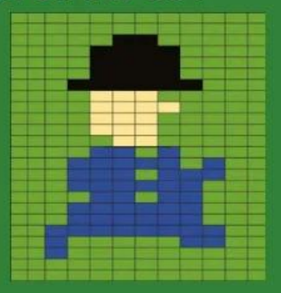
One aspect of the game which avoided the chop was a map which allowed players to see where both the cop and the thief were located. It was inspired by Bob Whitehead's map in *Chopper Command* and, as Garry says, "It enhanced the utility of the escalator because you needed to know where the Krook was before deciding to enter the lift." There was a little quirk in that, if the player ended up on the roof there was no way back down. "If the player was allowed to backtrack to a lower level, the game would have changed from a finite linear race to the finish (an action game) to a game of hide-and-seek (a strategy game)," Garry says. "As with the timer, this restriction set up the play mechanic as a finite linear race from the first floor to the end of the roof."

As development came to an end, Garry spent time ensuring the player could learn techniques to get through the obstacles as they became more challenging – the idea being that the game would be easy to play but difficult to master. When he finished the game, however, he dearly wished he had put music in it even though he always hated the tunes in Atari 2600 games. A tune was added to the Atari 5200 version but, in truth, Garry's original version was certainly more than good enough, quickly becoming one of the platform's most popular titles. "My first goal was to impress David, Alan, Bob and the rest of the West Coast designers," he says. And with this caper, he definitely succeeded at that. *

» [Atari 5200] *Keystone Kapers* was also adapted for the Atari 5200 with enhanced graphics, the ability to choose a level and background music.

KOLOURFUL KAPERS

HOW GARRY KITCHEN HELPED HIS GAME TO VISUALLY STAND OUT



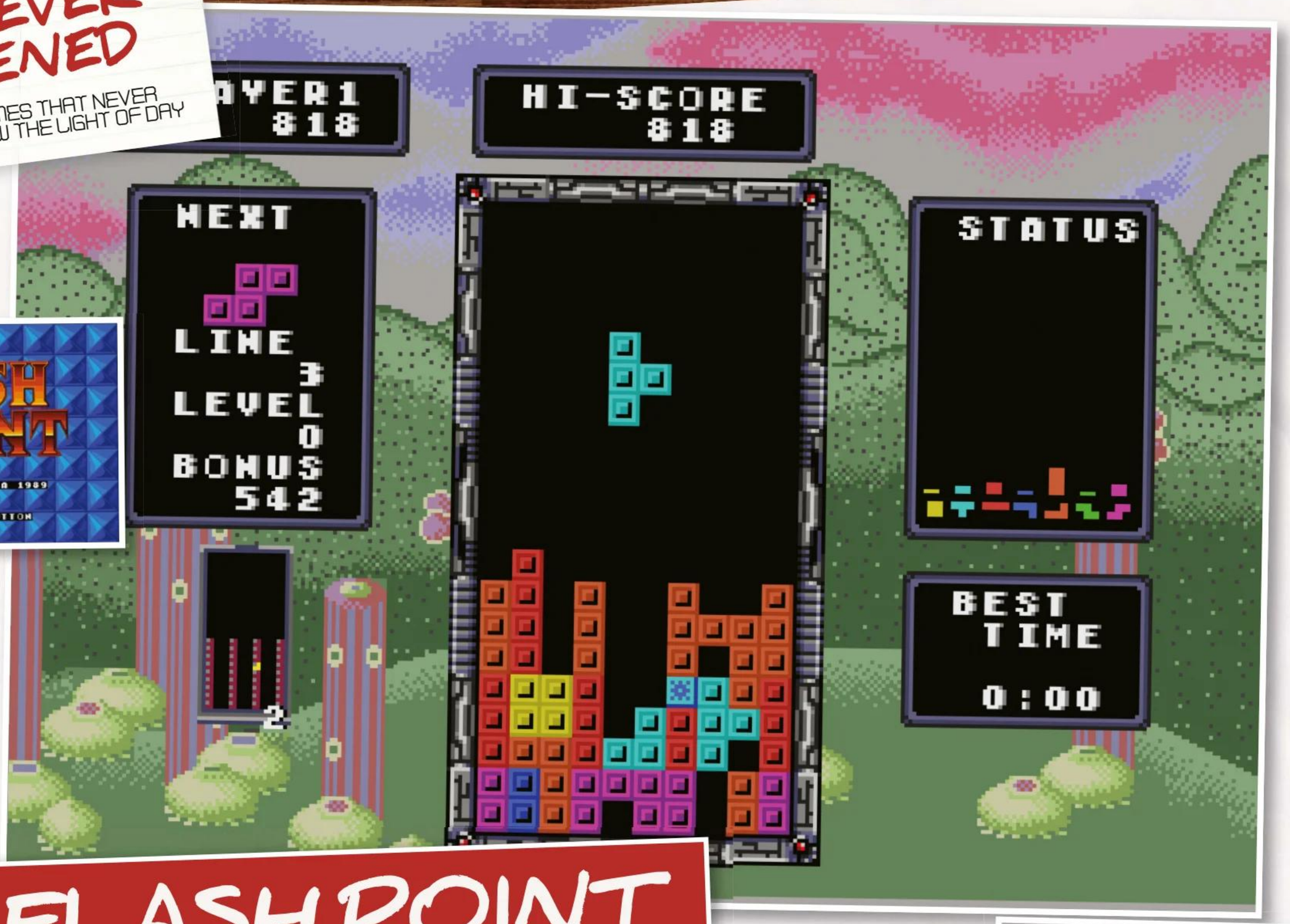
Keystone Kapers is praised for the quality of its graphics and animation. "I've been told that it's one of the few Atari 2600 games of that era that still stands up to scrutiny when you see the graphics," he says. But then he's long been a proficient artist, initially focussing on art at college before switching his major to electrical engineering.

He put his all into the Atari 2600. "It is unlike any other system in its crazy way in which it generates images, requiring both technical and artistic skills," he says. "But even with those crazy limitations, I was always thankful the 2600 had a great colour palette. It was a tremendous advantage that it had over seemingly superior systems like the Intellivision."

Careful to choose a palette of colours that worked well together for *Keystone Kapers*, Garry also ensured the game would have single line resolution for every object meaning objects were displayed with a higher resolution, thus appearing less blocky. He also wanted to ensure every object would be in full colour. "In *Keystone Kapers*, I also made an extra effort to ensure that the surfaces, like the floors and countertops, had a front surface and a top surface, with appropriate lighting, and this even extended to the radar, which had the same effect."

» [Atari 2600] This is how Keystone Kelly looked once colour was applied.

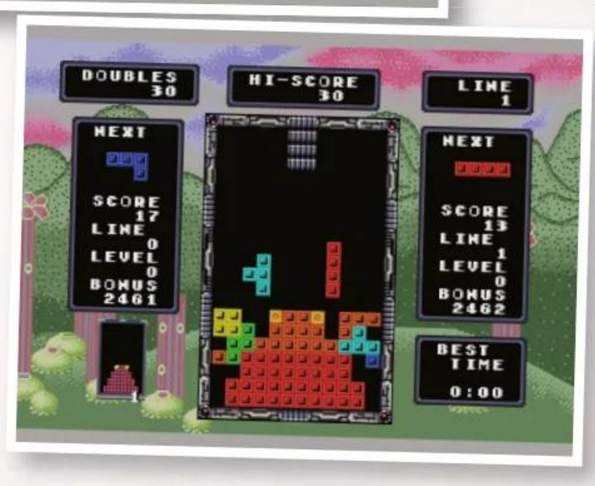
» [Mega Drive] The title screen showed an effort to stay close to the original arcade presentation.



» [Mega Drive] The mini-map of the original stage configuration on the left shows the mess we've made.

FLASH POINT

As a spin on a beloved puzzle game, Flash Point could have done big business on the Mega Drive – so why did the game never make it into production?



Words by Nick Thorpe

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:**
SEGA

» **DEVELOPER:**
SEGA

» **SYSTEM:**
MEGA DRIVE

» **DUE FOR RELEASE:**
1989

» [Mega Drive] Incomplete lines are a useful tool in *Flash Point*, allowing you to build near target blocks.

The simplicity of *Tetris* enabled it to become one of the world's best known puzzle games, one that has remained persistently popular for decades. The tale of how Tetris grew from its humble beginnings as Alexey Pajitnov's personal project into a global phenomenon is anything but simple, though – the infamous scramble for conversion rights left a whole bunch of companies with the impression that they had a claim to the game, some more legitimately than others.

One of those companies was Sega, which ended up with the Japanese arcade rights to *Tetris* through a chain of sub-licensing agreements, and produced a version using its System 16 board. Just as you'd expect, the game proved to be massively popular so Sega created versions for additional arcade boards and followed it up with a couple of variations. One of those was *Bloxeed*, which added power-ups and an element of time pressure to the standard *Tetris* formula.

The other variation was *Flash Point*. Rather than starting with an empty board, *Flash Point* presents players with a choice of stage layouts, each of which features one or more flashing blocks. Your job is to incorporate those flashing blocks into complete lines and clear them away, with bonus points available for doing so quickly. Presentation is bright and breezy, as a jaunty tune plays throughout, the backgrounds have been repurposed from *Fantasy Zone* and you get cameo appearances from Sega characters such as Flicky and Opa-Opa.

Sega soon began work on a Mega Drive conversion of *Flash Point*, which appeared to be based in large part on the work done on the Mega Drive version of *Tetris* – it carried over certain presentation choices, such as the addition of a graph showing piece distribution and a mechanical border around the playfield. Beyond that the conversion was rather faithful, including the two-player mode, the distinctive music and the use of *Fantasy Zone* backgrounds, though the character cameos were cut.

There were even some additions to the Mega Drive incarnation of the game. First off, a new Doubles Mode follows the basic

UNBLOCKED BLOCKS

COLUMNS
1990, SEGA

■ The Flash Mode of the console versions incorporates *Flash Point*'s goal of removing the flashing block to win. The Master System version of the game even uses the music from Sega's arcade version of *Tetris*.

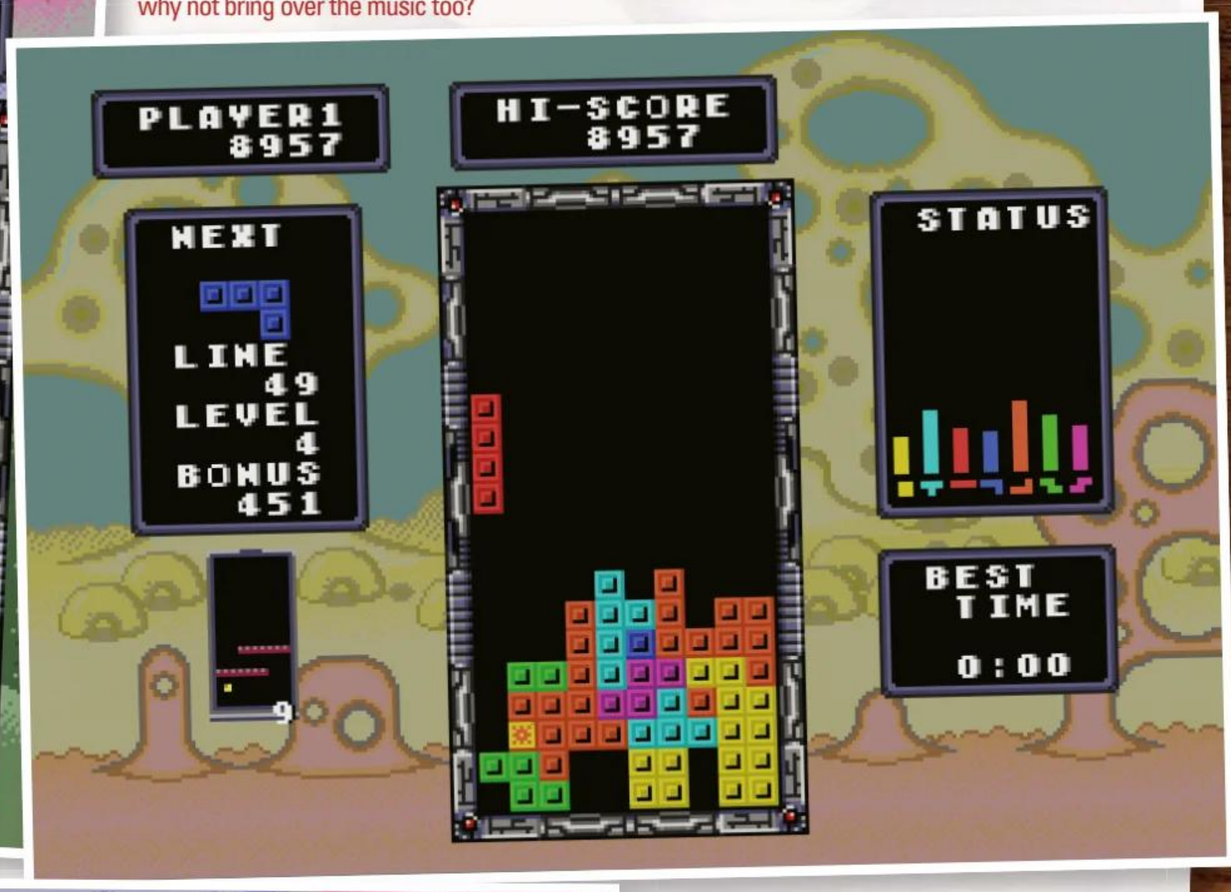
PUZZLED
1990, SNK

■ This Neo Geo game has a similar premise to *Flash Point*, in which you tackle pre-designed stages. Instead of eliminating specific blocks, your goal is to clear a path for a hot air balloon to float away.

PUYO PUYO TETRIS
2014, SONIC TEAM

■ While it doesn't have a *Flash Point* variant, this crossover is arguably the best version of *Tetris* of the many that were made by Sega, incorporating two amazing puzzle games in a variety of interesting ways.

» [Mega Drive] A traditional two-player mode is included, with players tackling stages individually.



» [Mega Drive] The *Fantasy Zone* backgrounds are an interesting choice – why not bring over the music too?

» [Mega Drive] The Construction Mode is an excellent addition that would have extended the game's appeal.

» [Mega Drive] The piece distribution graph on the right is straight out of Mega Drive *Tetris*.

rules of the main game, but allows two players to work together by simultaneously dropping pieces into widened stages. Better yet, a Construction Mode allowed players to create their own stages for both regular and Doubles play. Unfortunately, despite the effort that went into this version of *Flash Point*, the game was never announced to the public and disappeared with no fanfare.

Although the reason for the game's cancellation is unconfirmed, the fate of the Mega Drive version of *Tetris* gives us some fairly major clues to what was going on. The complexities of the licensing situation had led Sega to believe that it had secured the rights to produce the game through an agreement with Atari Games. Nintendo, which had secured the rights to all console and handheld versions, brought a legal case against Atari Games and Sega cancelled the Mega Drive release while the lawsuit was in progress – though not before a few copies had already been manufactured.

The existence of the previously unrevealed *Flash Point* conversion was finally revealed in 2006, via the PlayStation 2 release *Sega Ages 2500 Series Vol.28: Tetris Collection*. This compilation included *Tetris: New Century*, a modernised take on the original Sega arcade version of *Tetris*, as well as various arcade versions of *Tetris*, *Flash Point* and *Bloxeed*. Most notably, the Mega Drive versions of *Tetris* and *Flash Point* were included – the latter as a hidden bonus game, accessed by starting a game of arcade *Flash Point*, pausing it and holding right at the System option for a few seconds.

Sega has created a number of licensed *Tetris* games in recent years, but it feels unlikely that we'll ever see the Mega Drive version of *Flash Point* again. It doesn't follow the modern guidelines for *Tetris* games, and although Sega and M2 were given permission not to follow them when *Tetris* was included on the Mega Drive Mini in 2019, the version featured on that console was a new version rather than the 1989 version that was hurriedly withdrawn from production. All the same, we're pleased that the Mega Drive version of *Flash Point* did eventually surface, as it's an interesting take on a *Tetris* variant that arguably deserves more love. ✱

"Sega has created a number of licensed Tetris games in recent years, but it feels unlikely that we'll see the Mega Drive version of Flash Point again"

THE RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO

KONAMI ARCADE GAMES

WE LOOK BACK TO WHEN THE JAPANESE DEVELOPER WAS ONE OF THE LEADING PLAYERS IN THE 2D-OBSESSED ARCADE INDUSTRY

WORDS BY DARRAN JONES

When Konami announced that it would begin focussing on the lucrative mobile market instead of traditional console games in 2015 there was uproar from the videogame community, but ultimately the announcement was just Konami being Konami. After all, this was a company that started off in 1969 as a jukebox repairer and rental service. It gave that up in the late-Seventies when it moved into arcade videogames, and it's looked for good opportunities to expand its business ever since.

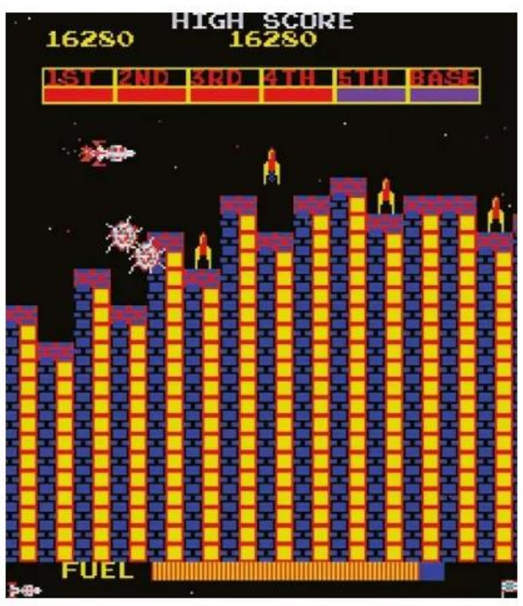
In addition to making console games and the aforementioned mobile titles, Konami also creates the successful *Yu-Gi-Oh!* trading card game and runs health and physical fitness clubs across Japan, as well as pachinko and pachislot machines. It still remains a dominant player in the industry today, and it's behind a number of big franchises, including *Metal Gear*, *Silent Hill*, Bomberman, *Frogger* and *Castlevania*. For the purpose of this feature, though, we'll be concentrating on its early arcade games, focussing on the many 2D titles that helped turn it into a dominant force during the 16- and 32-bit period. So join us as we replay some of Konami's most beloved arcade games. How many of the following do you remember? ✱

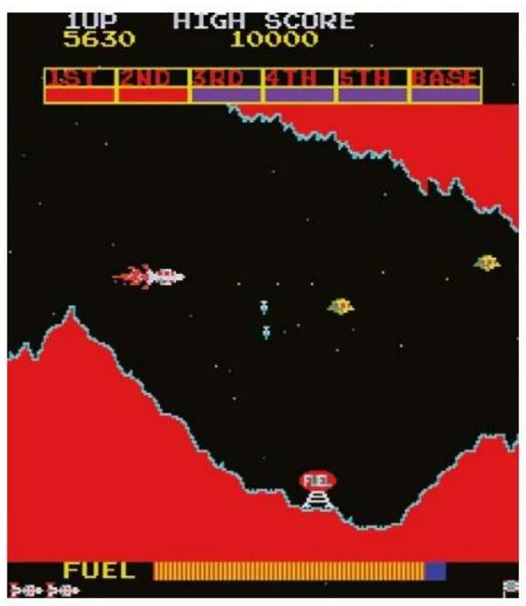
SPACE KING 1978

■ In the embryonic days of videogames it wasn't always easy to come up with your own exciting game ideas, so it made more sense to just 'borrow' someone else's. One of Konami's earliest games was what we could generously refer to as an homage to Taito's *Space Invaders*.

It's admittedly a slightly nicer looking effort, thanks to some more detailed visuals, but it's otherwise virtually identical to Taito's game, right down to the mothership that occasionally zips across the top of the screen and the endless march of the invaders, which gets faster as more of them are shot down.

Konami would do exactly the same thing the following year with *Space King 2*, but it's an even more brazen effort, featuring virtually identical sprites to Taito's own sequel, *Space Invaders Part II*. Fortunately for Konami, it soon began to stand on its own two feet. Greatness was just around the corner…



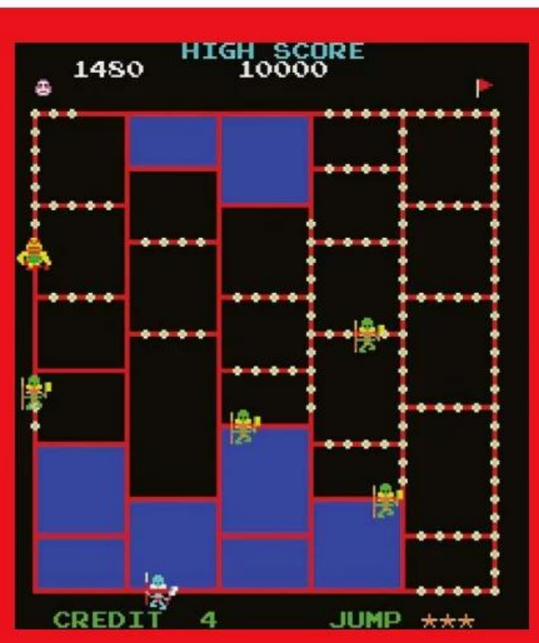


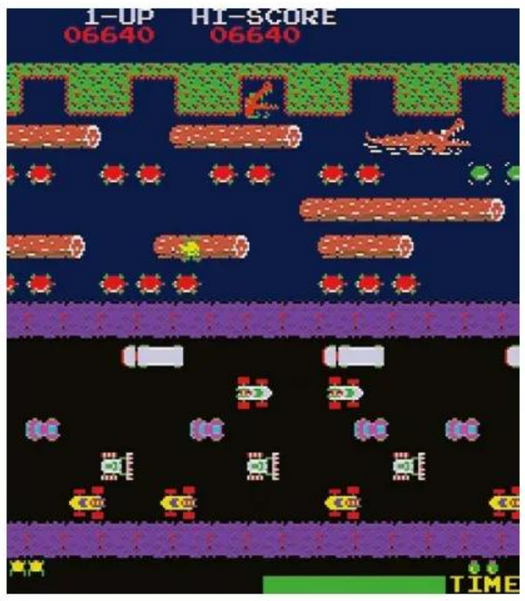
SCRAMBLE 1981

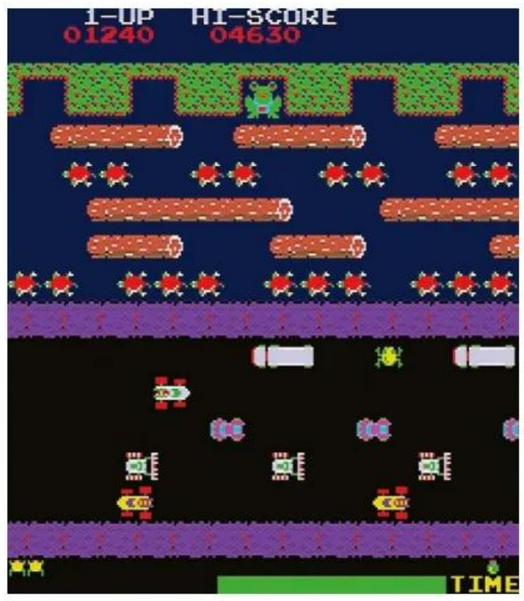
■ 1981 is considered by many to be a golden year for arcade games. One of Konami's best from the year is *Scramble*, which was one of the first shoot-'em-ups to feature forced scrolling. Taking place across a continually changing cityscape, it features a fantastic risk vs reward mechanic where you must destroy cylinders to top up your ever-decreasing fuel supply. Despite its success, it was only ported to the Vectrex and Tomy Tutor (although countless clones did appear on various home systems).

AMIDAR 1981

■ This enjoyable take on the maze genre tasks you with running around a set number of squares and rectangles and filling them in while avoiding numerous enemies. If you fill in all four corners of the level you'll gain temporary invincibility and can chase your normally impervious foes. You can otherwise avoid your pursuers by forcing them to jump a limited number of times, so you can run under them.

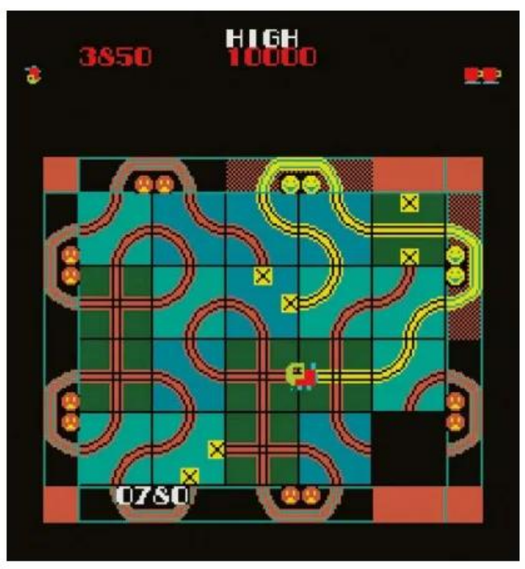






FROGGER 1981

■ *Frogger* was one of Konami's earliest success stories and has been ported across to countless home systems over the years. The aim is simplicity in itself, requiring you to cross a busy road and river without getting hit by traffic or falling into the water (why your frog can't swim is never fully explained). Get five frogs to safety and you're able to move to the next stage. It was succeeded by numerous sequels.



LOCO-MOTION 1982

■ This intriguing game is essentially an update of the old wooden and plastic sliding-block puzzle games. The action is viewed from above and features a series of tracks that need to be assembled so your train can visit nearby stations and pick up passengers. Annoyingly, your train continuously moves, so you have to ensure it doesn't run into any barriers or the edge of an empty square as you'll lose a life. It received a few conversions, appearing on the MSX, Intellivision and Tomy Tutor. ▶

POOYAN 1982

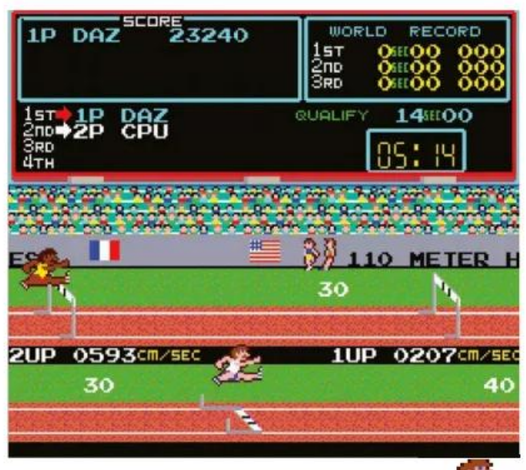
This entertaining action game revolves around Mama, a pig trying to protect her baby piglets from a gang of hungry wolves. The first stage sees the wolves descending from a tree on balloons, leaving Mama to shoot them down. Should she miss them, they'll steal her precious babies. The next level has the wolves ascending upwards so they can push a boulder on to the protective mother. It even throws in a few bonus stages too.

GYRUSS 1983

This is another superb shooter from Yoshiki Okamoto. It plays like a cross between *Galaga* and *Tempest*, featuring the fast-moving waves of the former and the forced perspective of the latter. It also features some superb rock-fused renditions of classical music if you needed further reasons to play it.

TIME PILOT 1982

Made by Yoshiki Okamoto before he moved to Capcom and created hits like *1942* and *Street Fighter II*, *Time Pilot* is an excellent little blaster that has you shooting down a set number of enemies that attack you from all directions. Once cleared, you shift to a new time zone, complete with tougher adversaries.



TRACK & FIELD 1983

Konami's arcade game was the bane of arcade operators everywhere, as it required you to furiously bash buttons in order to build up enough speed in each event. There are six on offer, including Long and High Jump, and all require stamina and great timing to master. It also features a nice rendition of *Chariots Of Fire*.

MIKIE 1984

This multi-screen game has Mikie running around a school in search of hearts. Along the way he's chased by his angry teacher and other faculty staff, and must use headbutts and sports balls to fend them off. The Japanese version takes place in a workplace rather than a school and features chiptunes of *A Hard Day's Night* and *Twist And Shout*.

HYPER SPORTS 1984

Konami's sequel to *Track & Field* features the same game mechanics from the original as well as extremely similar-looking sprite designs and graphics. It's arguably a far better game, though, as the chosen sports are a lot more varied and interesting to play.

While button bashing still features prominently throughout the seven available events (which include Swimming, Skeet Shooting, Archery and Triple Jump), there's a great deal of skill required, particularly on the likes of Skeet Shooting and Archery. It also popped up as a challenge on the popular Eighties kids show *First Class*.

GRADIUS 1985

Despite having an extremely innovative power-up system (picking up icons selects a new weapon that you can then choose to add to your ship), few games bothered to copy it. Their loss was Konami's gain, and a fusion of imaginative levels and challenging bosses led to countless sequels, including spin-off, *Parodius*.

GREEN BERET 1985

Also known as *Rush 'N Attack*, this extremely violent run-and-gun is unusual for its distinctive Cold War theme that sees you rushing behind enemy lines to save various POWs before they're executed by a firing squad. Rather foolishly you're armed only with a very effective knife, and it's one of the few arcade games we can think of that requires you to push up to jump (which everyone knows is madness). You can pick up the odd power-up however, including a rocket launcher and a devastating flamethrower, and the action is relentless.

YIE AR KUNG-FU 1985

Konami's one-on-one brawler helped establish the genre as we know it today, along with Irem's *Karate Champ*. It features energy bars, as well as progressively tougher opponents that must be dealt with before you face off against final adversary, Blues. It's also notable for featuring female combatants and a variety of different weapon-wielding opponents, which was unusual for the time. Like many of Konami's arcade games it was ported to home computers where it received a number of decent conversions. A sequel arrived the following year which added scrolling sections, but never received an arcade release.

SALAMANDER 1986

This *Gradius* spin-off is also known as *Life Force* and takes the series in interesting directions. Most versions replace the power bar for icons that instantly turn into weapons, and there's also a much-needed co-operative two-player mode. The game also alternates between horizontal and vertical scrolling stages. A sequel appeared in 1996.

WEC LE MANS 1986

Konami's game instantly stood out in arcades as the deluxe cabinet looked like a Prototype C race car and could rotate on a 360-degree spinning base. *WEC Le Mans* was the first game ever based on the popular sporting event, and featured both day and night racing. It received solid home conversions courtesy of Imagine Software.

CONTRA 1987

Konami's popular run-and-gun ripped off the likenesses of Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger to deliver one of the most anarchic blasters of the Eighties. Levels alternate between reaching the enemy base and then infiltrating it by running headlong into the screen. Konami released one more sequel in arcades before continuing the franchise on consoles and handhelds.

BRIAN BEUKEN TALKS YIE AR KUNG-FU

HOW THE AMSTRAD AND SPECTRUM PORTS WERE MADE

How did your team get to work on the project?

We drove down to Manchester for a meeting with David Ward, and a short time later we got a call asking us if we could port *Yie Ar* to ZX Spectrum, Amstrad and C64. Of course we said yes.

Did you face any problems?

As production got underway the Amstrad and Speccy versions progressed really well, but the C64 was struggling due to the size of the graphics and the programmer's inability to get a decent multiplexer working. Then all the games had problems with memory, as we really couldn't fit everything in.

My Assembly coding had improved well enough to get involved, so I started working on compression-based sprite systems, which could decode on the fly, a form of early RLL compression. It worked well for Amstrad and I wrote similar systems for the Spectrum. The C64 version ground to a halt, and after discussion Ocean decided to take it in-house, and Dave Collier took it on.

Did you work on the improved Spectrum 128K version?

Later after we had done the project I was invited down to Ocean to do the Spectrum 128K version myself, which I was very excited to do. It meant leaving my little village in Scotland and moving to the big city to work, but it was such a massive opportunity I couldn't turn it down. I moved, and that really started my 30-year career as a professional game coder.

Had you had much experience with the game before?

Nope. Never heard of it before we started it.

What support did you receive from Konami?

None... I worked direct for Ocean/Imagine who basically gave me yes/no feedback. I rented the arcade game (I think Ocean agreed to pay for it), and played it to death. We were pretty much left to get on with it. You must remember this was pre-internet days, so we'd send a cassette down to them every few weeks to ensure we were on track, and as long as we were progressing towards the deadline they were happy. The only concern from them was the C64, which clearly was not working out, so the development manager at the time, Colin Stokes, came up to Scotland to assess the projects and made the decision to take the C64 version in-house, but he was happy with the other versions.

How did you manage to balance the difficulty between the different characters?

The AI was pretty simple and mostly worked on a ranging system with a random or timed choice with some clear offence and defence reaction moves. Different characters were biased towards ranged or melee attacks and their response speed was reduced to create difficulty. Back then we didn't have the luxury of memory or CPU power to do much more than that.

Brian Beukan interview first appeared in issue 130

JAMES HIGGINS INTERVIEW

HOW JAMES CODED COMBAT SCHOOL FOR THE AMSTRAD CPC

How did you come to work on *Combat School*?

I'd been doing some freelance projects for Ocean Software for the French home-computer range by Thompson (M05, T07-70, T09) but had originally approached Gary Bracey as an Amstrad CPC programmer. He offered me the CS gig, but wanted me to work in the office in Manchester as a contractor still. I agreed readily as the bedroom-coder thing was getting a little old. So – I moved to Manchester and spent the next three months living in a B&B in Chorlton-cum-Hardy and working at 6 Central Street squeezed between Mike Lamb and Ronnie Fowles.

Did you have access to the original source code?

No – we had an arcade machine from which a video was captured and used for reference. We could play the game any time we needed to clarify some details when needed. For the most part these were less arcade conversions and more arcade impressions.

Why wasn't the Amstrad version a straight Spectrum port?

Ocean actually did very few internal straight ports at that time. Almost all of the big titles of the day had individual coders – *Renegade* and *Gryzor* being two notable examples. Eventually coders caught on to the fact that they could get two bonuses for pretty much the exact same code and the Z80 coders handled both platforms and occasionally others. MSX for example.

How long did *Combat School* take to create and how many of you worked on it?

I believe it took about 3 months. Me on the Amstrad with some help from Mike Lamb and Ronnie Fowles doing the art on both. Not sure if anyone helped him. It was a long time ago now.

What was the biggest technical challenge you faced while working on *Combat School*?

It was mostly about getting it done on time. Fortunately Mike Lamb was steaming ahead and helped out with the last couple of events or I might still be working on it. I'm not sure why I was moving slow – I was used to working fast. In all my previous titles I was responsible for organising the art – so perhaps working in a team for the first time was causing me some issues. Again, it was a long time ago now, so my memory is hazy.

How do you think your conversion compares to the other 8-bit versions of the time?

At the time I thought poorly. One, I needed help to finish it, and two – it was the first time I'd really seen what a C64 was capable of.

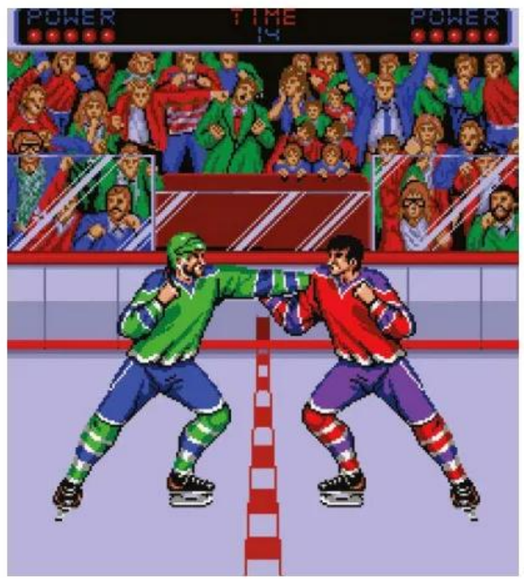
James Higgins interview first appeared in issue 137

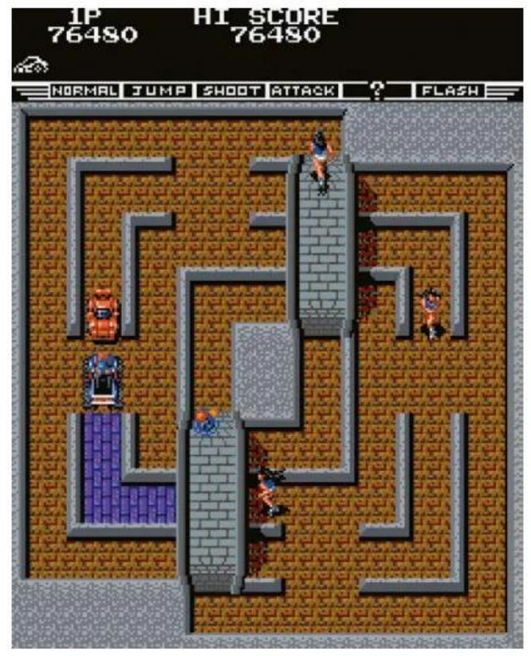
COMBAT SCHOOL 1987

Best described as a military take on *Hyper Sports*, Konami's game actually comes in two versions: one with a trackball, and the other using a traditional joystick. Both games are the same, alternating between button-mashing events like the obstacle course and arm wrestling and then switching to precision-based shooting ranges. It culminates with a tough face-off against your Lee Emery-inspired drill instructor.

BLADES OF STEEL 1987

If you're looking for an authentic reproduction of ice hockey you're going to be extremely disappointed. What you will find, however, is a hectic sports game with tight responsive controls, some excellent AI and the ability to take part in brawls. It didn't make much of an impact in the UK, which may explain why it had so few home conversions.





FAST LANE 1987

This fast-paced reaction game is effectively an update of Sega's 1979 game, *Head On*. The aim is to drive around a maze and eat up the asphalt and grass while avoiding a Bigfoot-styled truck which will immediately destroy you on impact as it makes its way towards you. Power-ups can be collected by running over roller-skating girls, which will allow you to stun, destroy or jump over the troublesome truck.

DEVASTATORS 1988

This ambitious run-and-gun took elements from *Cabal*, *Contra* and *Ikari Warriors* and combined them into an interesting shooter where you continually run forward into the screen mowing down waves of enemies. The stages range from airfields to jungles, and many of the bosses are very satisfying to take down. It's quite a technically accomplished game, which may explain the lack of home ports.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 1989

While always popular, scrolling fighters began to dominate the arcades in the late-Eighties and early Nineties, and it largely became an arms race for supremacy between Capcom and Konami. Konami scored big with its *Turtles* game as it featured a recognisable licence, tremendous visuals and intense, four-player action. Its runaway success saw it ported to a large number of home systems, including the ZX Spectrum!

BLOCK HOLE 1989

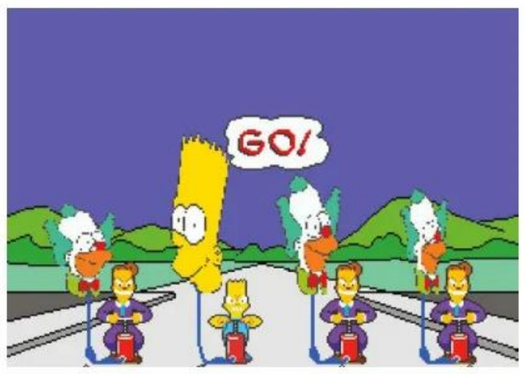
This quirky puzzle shooter takes elements of *Tetris* but adds an inventive spin to proceedings. As different shapes fall from the sky you must shoot blocks at them to turn them into squares or rectangles, which will then disappear. It's a neat concept that's bolstered by an entertaining competitive two-player mode. It's known by the name *Quarth* in its native Japan.

ALIENS 1990

It's not a very accurate portrayal of the movie, but *Aliens* proves to be a fantastic run-and-gun thanks to varied gameplay, an exotic range of aliens (many of which are exclusive to the game) and excellent visuals. There's a great two-player option where you're joined by Hicks but, shockingly, it never received any home ports.

PARODIUS DA! 1990

Starting off life on the MSX, Konami's parody of its *Gradius* series is gleefully silly, swapping out traditional space enemies for penguins, flying cat ships and countless other bizarre foes. The outlandishness also extends to the game's bosses, which range from can-can dancers to sumo pigs. Like the MSX game it features a choice of characters, all of which feature their own unique weapon upgrade paths.

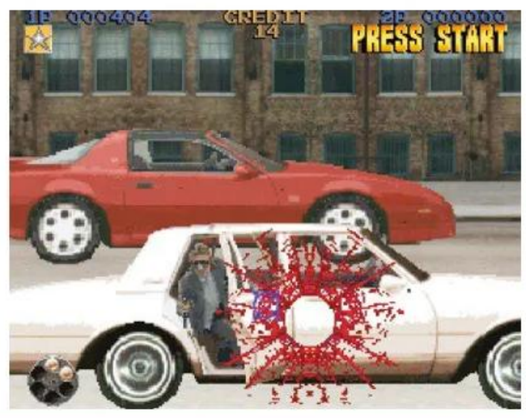


THE SIMPSONS 1991

While it's mechanically very similar to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *The Simpsons* mixes things up a bit by including a team-up mechanic, which varies depending on which family members link up. All the characters fight with their own distinctive weapons, and virtually every member of Springfield makes a cameo, either as an adversary or as background fodder. Like *Turtles* it's a four-player game, although a smaller two-player cabinet also exists.

SUNSET RIDERS 1991

Konami's humorous take on the Western is still a tremendous amount of fun. It's a run-and-gun at heart that has you seeking out bounties on progressively tougher opponents. There are lots of hilarious sight gags (running into rakes, getting immolated by Molotov cocktails), while the bosses are constantly demanding without being unfair.



LETHAL ENFORCERS 1992

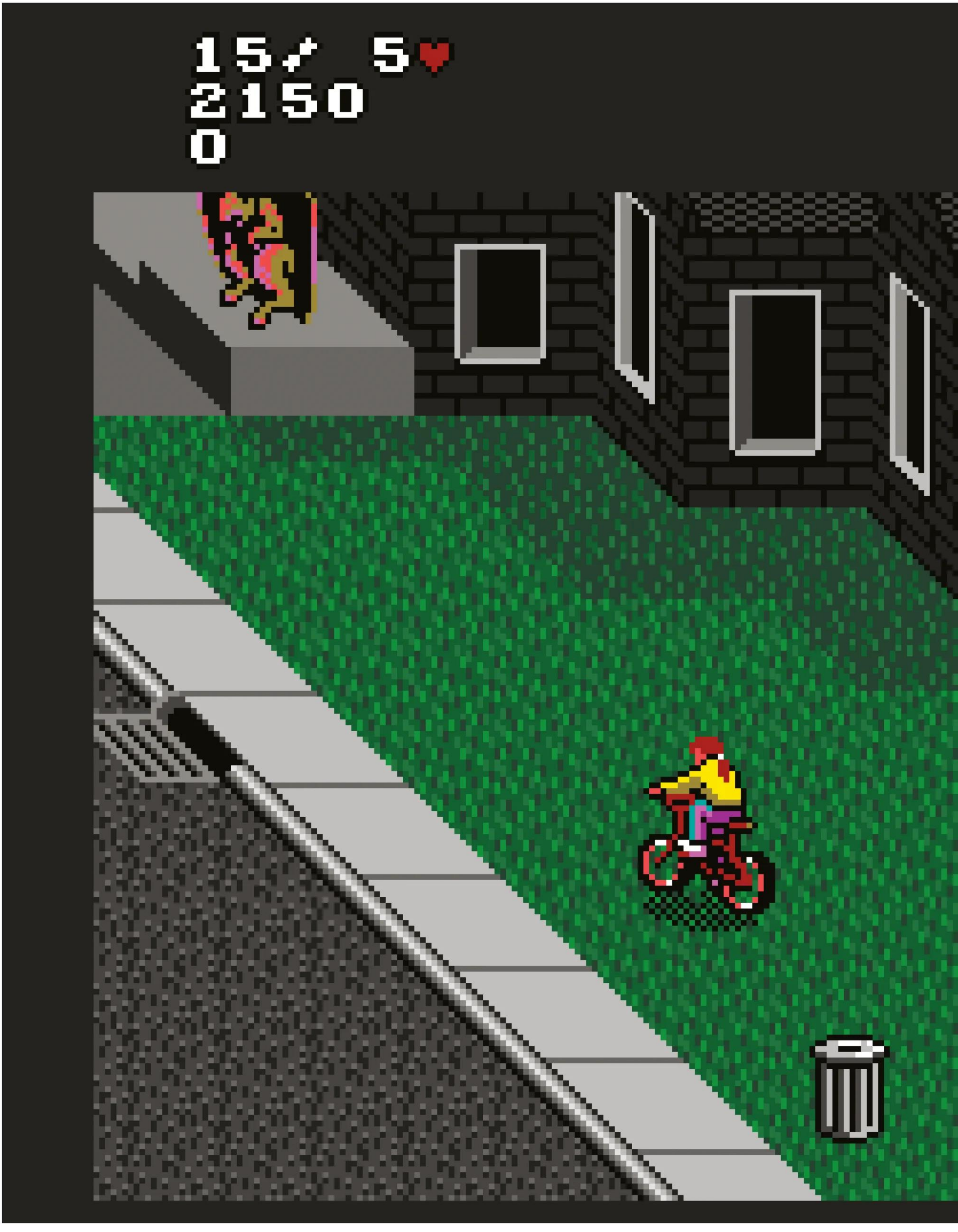
Konami's on-rails lightgun shooter drew controversy at the time for its use of realistic digitised graphics. Unlike many similar games it was largely set in real-world locations like banks and high streets, but it's otherwise a fairly conventional blaster. It was followed by a sequel in 1994 that was set in the American Old West.

X-MEN 1992

Here's another scrolling fighter that makes great use of its licence. Up to six players can play at once, and the playable characters include favourites such as Wolverine, Nightcrawler and Colossus. Based on the 1989 *X-Men* cartoon pilot, each hero has their own specific mutant power (which typically clears the screen of enemies) and features lots of classic bosses to battle.

DRAGOON MIGHT 1995

Although it borrows heavily from the *Samurai Shodown* series, there are plenty of reasons to play this Japanese exclusive. There are some truly odd characters among the roster, including an ass-slapping man on bladed stilts, and it's possible to interact with the scenery and use it against your opponent on certain stages.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Paperboy 2

A BIT OF BAD NEWS

» AMIGA » 1992 » MINDSCAPE

One of the biggest problems I have with videogames is that when a successful one comes along, some person in a suit comes along and demands a new and updated version of the same thing – ideally by next Christmas. Of course, not every game is particularly well-suited to updates and sequels, even if it was a success, but the suit-wearing people are often not involved in the creative process enough to recognise when that's the case. In many ways, it's not important so long as people can be persuaded to part with their hard-earned cash. That's how sequels like *Paperboy 2* come to be.

Now, I've spent many a happy moment playing *Paperboy*. The secret to making a great occupation-based arcade game, which the designers nailed, is in combining the everyday with the absurd – hence the ridiculous dangers you face in ensuring that subscribers get their morning news fix. That concept was explored fairly fully, and the additions to *Paperboy 2* feel pretty insignificant as a result. You can play as Papergirl now, and deliver on the other side of the street. Sometimes, if you do something like stopping a thief, your own deeds will end up in the paper.

If the new features of *Paperboy 2* had been included in a later version of *Paperboy* as fun optional extras, they probably would have been warmly welcomed. Taken as a reason to publish a new version of *Paperboy* on a platform that already had a perfectly good version of the game, as most did at the time, they start to feel like a rather flimsy excuse. That's before you even consider that the Amiga version of the original looks and sounds rather better than this sequel, which is frankly inexcusable. Sometimes new doesn't always mean better, and it feels like that's a lesson that the unfortunate buyers of *Paperboy 2* learned at their own expense. ✱

ULTIMATE GUIDE

Super SWIV

FOLLOWING ITS HIT ARCADE PORT OF TECMO'S SILKWORM, THE SALES CURVE SHIFTED ITS UNOFFICIAL ACRONYM-BASED FOLLOW-UP SERIES FROM HOME COMPUTERS TO CONSOLES IN 1992. JUMP INTO THAT JEEP OR HELI AS RETRO GAMER GOES SUPER SWIV

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON

THE SWIV STORY

RETRO GAMER LOOKS BACK AT ALL THE GAMES IN THE SILKWORM SERIES

SILKWORM

■ The first game in this co-op series hit arcades in the late-Eighties and became The Sales Curve's first licence. Scrolling horizontally and side-on, it's aesthetically diverse from the rest of the series but instigated the compulsive simultaneous two-player action of heli and Jeep. All the home conversions are decent to play as well.

SWIV

■ Debuting on the 16-bit systems in 1991, the original *SWIV* took the ethos of *Silkworm* (and its two-player Jeep-heli combo) and switched to an overhead, vertically scrolling view. Gameplay-wise, it's the same frantic shooting action, including a mid-level enemy inspired by *Silkworm*'s Goose fighter. It was also released on 8-bit formats.

As Retro Gamer detailed in issue 219's Ultimate Guide, shoot-'em-up *Silkworm* was a surprise hit in arcades and on home computers. Converted by the recently formed The Sales Curve (via its in-house development team, Random Access), its success persuaded its boss, Jane Cavanagh, to extend the brand, producing the *Silkworm*-inspired *SWIV* on 8- and 16-bit computers. A year later, the next chapter in this dual-player, multi-vehicle series appeared exclusively on the 16-bit consoles now solidly dominating the videogame market.

In *Super SWIV*'s highly original plot (sarcasm mode off), a secret underground race is plotting to take over the world. Several hi-tech military vehicles are missing – including a prototype jet fighter, a battle tank and an underwater mobile missile platform – and are being used for its nefarious plans. This highly advanced race has taken our technology, studied its components and inner workings, and adapted it into an army of computerised drones, each programmed to ruthlessly eliminate any human opposition.

"WHETHER YOU PLAY AS THE HELICOPTER OR JEEP, EACH HAS AN EXTENSIVE ARRAY OF WEAPONRY"

Aware of the underground warmongers but unable to track them due to their cloaking technology, humans finally get a break when a malfunction exposes them for a short period. The location: a small volcanic island in the mid-Atlantic. Underneath here lies a massive army of robots and drones, almost ready to destroy everything on the surface. There's no time to assemble a significant force; a small, fast but powerful strike team is what humankind needs. We know where they are, we just need two heroes to step up and neutralise each enemy base beneath the uninhabited island. Only a legion of lethal robotic guardians stands in their way.

Super SWIV takes place over six distinct vertically scrolling levels. First up is the desert, where enemy attack helicopters and tanks, missile launchers and more bombard the players as they pick their way through a shanty town and dusty plains. Next is a jungle scenario, the lush undergrowth providing useful cover for the enemy tanks ▶

» [SNES] Setting off at the start of *Super SWIV*.

» [SNES] These pesky orbs can absorb a lot of fire.

SUPER SWIV/MEGA SWIV

■ Sequel *Super SWIV* is similar to *SWIV*, but with updated graphics and separate levels. The latter is a welcome adjustment from the earlier game's continuous blasting endurance exercise, and there's also greater variation in weaponry and an admittedly simplistic plot. The Mega Drive conversion, *Mega SWIV*, includes an extra level.

SWIV 3D

■ Released on PC only in 1996, *SWIV 3D* followed in the footsteps of the *Strike* series, transposing its 16-bit style to a modern, 3D landscape where the player sits behind their vehicle as the background rotates. Free-roaming and mission-based, there's still plenty of action for shoot-'em-up fans.

SWIV

■ Adapted from 1992's *Super SWIV*, this (inevitably) cut-down Game Boy Color game nevertheless retains much of the mayhem and action of the original SNES release. The gameplay area is cramped but suitably vibrant, and it boasts excellent music and crunching sound effects.

"SUPER SWIV IS A FURIOUSLY DIFFICULT GAME, WITH HORDES OF ENEMIES SPITTING MISSILES AND LASERS AT THE PLAYER"

» [SNES] The desert outside of the initial shanty town.

» [SNES] Level three's dry riverbed eventually turns into a river after the dam.

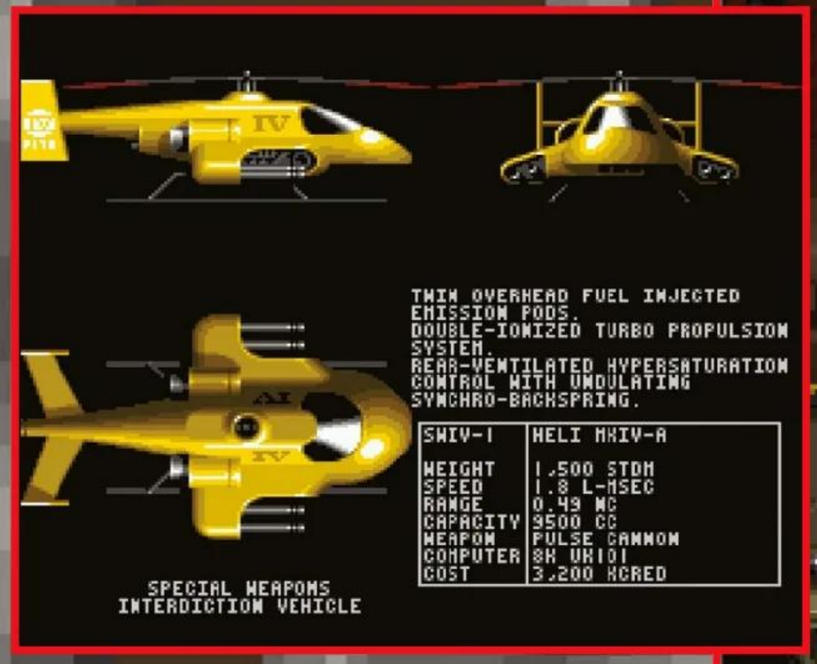
▶ and mines, followed by a dried-up riverbed that gives way to a gushing river. Negotiate these, and it's on to the enemy's air base, suspended 30,000 feet in the air, then the molten lava of a recently erupted volcano and, finally, the enemy's main complex.

To tackle this vast array of enemies and hazards, we have a humble Jeep and helicopter. Both have distinctive characteristics, good and bad. The heli is faster and can zoom across any part of the screen but only fires forward, while the Jeep has a rotational gun that fires in any direction (handily 'locked' in place when you hold down the fire button). However, the Jeep is slower and can be impeded by ground obstacles, although its ability to jump negates this drawback to a certain extent. The vehicles are immune to collisions with enemies not on their plane – the chopper can't smash into ground vehicles nor the Jeep with airborne craft.

Whether you play as the helicopter or Jeep, each has an extensive array of weaponry. These fall into two categories: permanent weapons are with the vehicle until it is destroyed, while special weapons have limited use and are best saved for tricky encounters. Additionally, each permanent weapon is upgradeable – collecting a silver-lined token boosts the level of your current weapon up to a maximum of seven. The permanent weapons are: Bullets (slow but deadly, especially on the higher levels), Flame (most effective at close range), Plasma (fast, with a wide range on higher levels), Laser (destroys everything in its path) and Ionic (a formidable pulse that jumps from enemy to enemy).

Each weapon loses a segment of power upon losing a life, although the player can store tokens once a weapon reaches the maximum, ensuring the weapon remains fully charged. Special weapons are instantly strong but only have one use. Represented as red token bonuses, X Missiles scream up the screen, tearing all enemies in their path apart. Scorch sends an expanding band of fire out from the player's vehicle, cremating any nearby enemy, while Homing Missiles launches a series of seek-and-destroy explosives against all of the player's attackers. The player retains their special weapons when they lose a life, and you can store an infinite amount of them (although the screen only displays the most recent 12). The last one, a flashing icon, is the next one to be used, and all these power-ups are located within rectangular containers. Destroying them releases a clutch of valuable icons.

There are two more items to collect in *Super SWIV*. Destroy one of the many glowing mines, and a large bubble will appear. The player has two options here: shooting it engulfs the screen in a white ▶


TWIN OVERHEAD FUEL INJECTED EMISSION PODS.
DOUBLE-IONIZED TURBO PROPULSION SYSTEM.
REAR-VENTILATED HYPERSATURATION CONTROL WITH UNDULATING SYNCHRO-BACKSPRING.
SWIV-I | HELI MKIV-A
WEIGHT | 1,500 STDM
SPEED | 1.8 L-MSEC
RANGE | 0.49 MC
CAPACITY | 9500 CC
WEAPON | PULSE CANNON
COMPUTER | 8K UK101
COST | 3,200 KCRED
SPECIAL WEAPONS INTERDICTION VEHICLE

» [SNES] An intro screen that'll be familiar to fans of *SWIV*.

» [SNES] Bullets can quickly fill the screen, so do your best to avoid them.

» [SNES] The level-long boss of level four. This stage has both players transform into jet fighters.

DEVELOPER Q&A

WE SPOKE TO PROGRAMMER RON PIEKET ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE ON SUPER SWIV

WITH WHOM DID YOU WORK ON *SUPER SWIV*?
I was the only programmer, and I worked with Ned Langman – we came up with and wrote the original *SWIV* on the Amiga.

WHEN DID WORK START?
Not until it was clear that *SWIV* was a hit. And then it was basically a crunch from day one. I think total development time was something crazy like four or five months. I remember taking my development kit home, and the Nintendo kit. I was working around the clock, and pulled 100-hour weeks or something stupid like that. I programmed and I slept – and I didn't do an awful lot of sleeping!

WERE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE SUPER NINTENDO?
Nope, I had to learn a whole new machine. And, of course, this was before the internet, so communication between Ned and myself was difficult. It required me to go into the office just to get a floppy disk with the latest art on.

IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE…
It was a mad dash. It was a new assembly language for me to learn, and most of the documentation was in Japanese. It all had to happen within four or five months, and I wouldn't want to repeat that. It was really brutal.

IS THERE MUCH IN COMMON BETWEEN *SWIV* AND *SUPER SWIV*?
They have a lot in common, and I think Ned converted the artwork from the Amiga to the SNES, which had a lot more colours. A lot of the behaviour was also brought over, but if you look at the games side-by-side, there are many differences.

THE BIGGEST CHANGE IS THAT *SUPER SWIV* IS NOT CONTINUOUS – WHY CHANGE THAT?
That's a good question. I can't remember if it was done out of necessity or considered better design for console players. Most of it was started from scratch, and we decided to make a few changes and upgrades, make it a bit fancier, which in hindsight sounds crazy given the amount of time we had!

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISHED YOU'D HAD MORE TIME FOR?
There's one thing, and it's really minor – between levels you get a bonus score, and it has a plain background. I thought we should have put some graphics there, which would have made it a bit nicer.

DID YOU PROGRAM ANY OTHER SNES GAMES?
I went on to do *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* and helped out with *The Lion King* at Virgin Interactive. That super crunch is really what pushed me away from working at The Sales Curve.

DO YOU RECALL WHY THE GAME WAS RENAMED IN THE US?
In Europe, we had brand recognition. So the publisher renamed it because *SWIV* didn't really mean anything to them. But then *Firepower* doesn't really mean anything either, so go figure.

Our thanks to Ron for his time.

BOSS RUSH

LEVEL ONE (MEGA SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

This oval construction doesn't fire directly at the player; instead, it hurls glowing mines that explode if they aren't shot in quick time.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

The emplacement has two stages, but the first can be destroyed almost instantly with high-powered weapons. Try to eliminate one or two mines before concentrating fire on it.

LEVEL ONE (SUPER SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

A giant sandcrawler that spits laser beams at the player. Eventually, choppers join its assault. Ground vehicles pull out from each side.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

Firstly, take out the cannons between shots. Then, shoot the two exits as the vehicles leave. This is the boss's only vulnerable spot.

LEVEL TWO (SUPER SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

Three giant cannons, each shielded, fire in turn, in addition to smaller cannons constantly spitting bullets.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

Wait until a canopy retracts before focussing your fire on that cannon. The flame weapon is handy here, but the smaller guns are immune and a pain.

"WITH A RENEWED INTEREST TODAY IN RETRO-STYLED SHMUPS, WE RECKON A REBOOT IS DUE"

SEGA SWIV

RETRO GAMER LOOKS AT THE OTHER VERSION OF SUPER SWIV: MEGA SWIV

Some new development faces arrived for the Mega Drive iteration of *Super SWIV*, and they helped create another excellent shmup, albeit appearing later than ideal in the Mega Drive's life. Apart from the necessary adaptations in terms of graphics and sound, there's an extra level at the start and a less busy screen, making *Mega SWIV* a touch easier than its SNES cousin. Otherwise, the Jeep lacks a jump but appears to skim over many obstacles anyway, and it's a solid shoot-'em-up for undemanding fans of the genre.

» [Mega Drive] At its higher levels, the Plasma Cannon is a devastating weapon.

» [Mega Drive] This high-speed bullet train yields five golden stars when destroyed. It seems a bit unfair on the passengers, though.

» [SNES] If you're not quick, this devious enemy picks up the power-up boxes.

RETRO GAMER'S GUIDE TO BESTING SUPER SWIV'S AND MEGA SWIV'S END-OF-LEVEL BOSSES

LEVEL THREE (SUPER SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

This underwater menace chucks spinning missiles from its four ancillary stations while the central column unleashes a spiral of bullets.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

Nip inside the circle of bullets while taking out the four bases in between. You have to wait for them to surface before attacking.

LEVEL FOUR (SUPER SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

This mammoth boss is encountered early on in level four as the player traverses up its sickly green body. Both players play as jet fighters.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

Avoid the rotor, but shoot at it to force the mini-boss to exit its large frame. Then, make sure you don't get caught at the bottom of the screen.

LEVEL FIVE (SUPER SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

A vast tank-like emplacement awaits at the end of the volcano level. Its main cannon appropriately sweeps fire at the player.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

Concentrate fire on the cannon, preferably with the wide plasma shot that'll keep you out of harm's way. Watch out for stray lava from the sides.

LEVEL SIX (SUPER SWIV)

DESCRIPTION:

A metallic beast that commands an army of enemies. The shielded top protects a Death Star-style exhaust pipe.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:

The laser is best, as the shield blocks everything else. Pour it on, collect the special extra weapon, and fire into the exposed vent. Great shot, kid!

flash, eliminating all enemies, while picking it up places a shield around the helicopter or Jeep, making it invulnerable for a short amount of time. Certain enemies also release a swerving star – collecting this grants the player 100 points. Admittedly, that's a fairly insignificant amount, but at the end of each level 1,000 points are allocated for each star picked up. With extra lives awarded at 50,000 points, 100,000 points and every 100,000 points after that, it's well worth seeking out these elusive stars.

Despite this additional help, *Super SWIV* remains a furiously difficult game, with hordes of enemies spitting missiles and lasers at the player or screaming down the screen at a breakneck pace. Fortunately, as with the other games in the series, you can bring a friend along to battle the underground menace, playing simultaneously as both Jeep and helicopter and dispensing double the firepower. Talking of firepower, *Super SWIV* was renamed *Firepower 2000* in the United States at the behest of its American distributor.

Contemporary reviews generally appreciated *Super SWIV*'s slickness while criticising its lack of originality. "OK, we've seen it all before," declared *Computer & Video Games* magazine, "but *Super SWIV* deserves credit for having a go anyway and coming out better than most other games in the genre". The theme continued in the dedicated Nintendo press. "Graphics and sonics are excellent but I found the lack of [a] difficulty setting and continues very frustrating," noted *N-Force*'s Chris Rice in its 78% review from December 1992. With power-up containers generally situated to the left and right of the main screen, and therefore easy to miss, *Super SWIV* is indeed one of the tougher SNES shoot-'em-ups, despite some generously simple bosses that are more a feat of endurance than bullet-dodging.

Two years after the Super Nintendo game, *Super SWIV* debuted on the Mega Drive, now dubbed *Mega SWIV* (see the Sega SWIV panel). The series abandoned its 2D roots for 1996's *SWIV 3D*, and apart from an appearance on the Game Boy Advance in 2001, it has remained dormant since. With a renewed interest today in retro-styled shmups, we reckon a reboot is due, but in the meantime, for some military-based sci-fi shooting, you can't go far wrong with *Super SWIV*, the console shmup that's even better with a friend. ★

» [SNES] Here we go, we've got a world to save!

retro* GAMER's FAVOURITE...

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS GAMES

If Royal Mail can celebrate the 50th anniversary of Dungeons & Dragons by releasing a bounty of commemorative stamps, it's only fair we do something similar to mark the occasion. So here's our essential retro picks based on the iconic tabletop game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson

Chill Hobgoblin- Attacks Jaheira
Abdel- Attacks Chill Hobgoblin
Viconia- Attacks Chill Hobgoblin
Minsc- Attacks Chill Hobgoblin
Imoen- Attacks Chill Hobgoblin
Edwin- Attacks Chill Hobgoblin
Jaheira- Attacks Chill Hobgoblin

BALDUR'S GATE

■ The original *Baldur's Gate* was a landmark game, both for developer BioWare and *D&D* fans. It's a wonderful romp through the Forgotten Realms allowing you to rub shoulders with classic heroes like Elminster and Drizzt Do'Urden, while you solve the secret behind your master's murder. Beamdog's *Enhanced Edition* is easily the best way to experience it today.

ICEWIND DALE

■ It may feel far more combat-focussed than BioWare's *D&D* games, but this effort from Black Isle Studios is still great today, more so if you play Beamdog's *Enhanced Edition*. It certainly feels a lot more challenging than the *Baldur's Gate* games, but its twisting storyline will compel you to continue, even when your party dies for the umpteenth time.

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II: THE LEGEND OF DARKMOON

■ This masterful sequel to the excellent *Eye Of The Beholder* is a far more expansive adventure than its predecessor. Puzzles are more complex, there are new outdoor areas to explore, while Darkmoon Temple is ginormous. There's much more interactivity within the game world and a larger array of enemies. It's also possible to import your heroes from the original game. Huzzah!

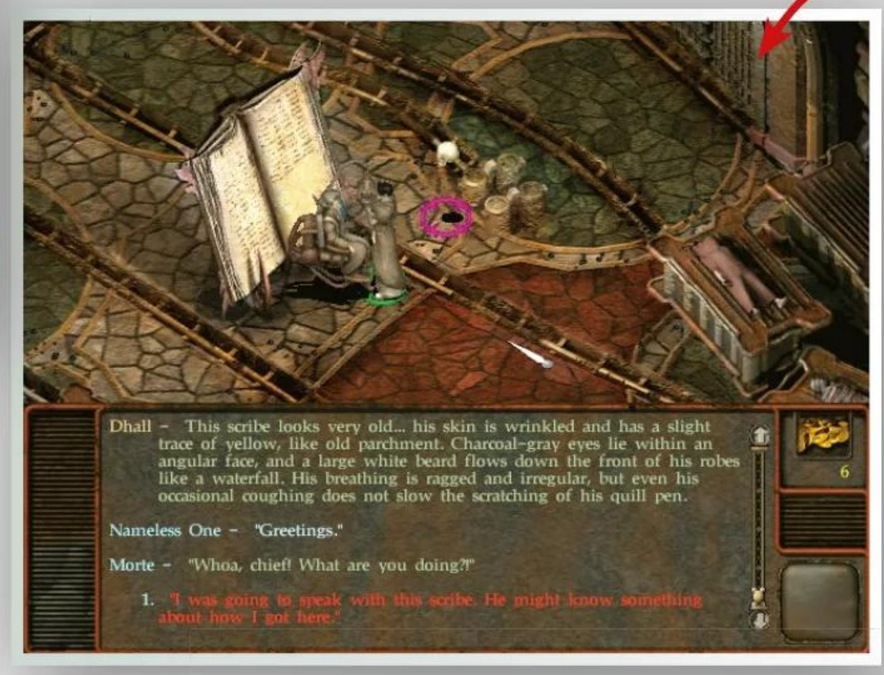
THERE ARE TWO CLERICS STANDING HERE. AS YOU APPROACH, THEY BOW SLIGHTLY. THE WOMAN SPEAKS WITH DELIGHT, "WELCOME TO DARKMOON! I AM NADIA, AND THIS IS MY BROTHER JORIL. HOW MAY WE BE OF SERVICE?"
INQUIRE
ATTACK
LEAVE

SHADOW OVER MYSTARA

■ Capcom's sequel to *Tower Of Doom* is truly magnificent and one of the best scrolling fighters to boot. Graphically it looks superb with huge, well-animated monsters and stunning backdrops. It offers plenty of variety thanks to multiple routes through most stages and there are a large number of characters to master. Both games are currently available digitally via *Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara*.

FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE

■ This entertaining action adventure plays out similarly to EA's *The Lord Of The Ring* games (developer Stormfront Studios worked on *The Two Towers*) and is best described as a steroids-injected *Golden Axe*. Penned by the acclaimed *D&D* novelist RA Salvatore, *Demon Stone* is an enjoyable hack-and-slash with some great setpieces, dramatic boss fights and three unique characters to master.


Dhall – This scribe looks very old... his skin is wrinkled and has a slight trace of yellow, like old parchment. Charcoal-gray eyes lie within an angular face, and a large white beard flows down the front of his robes like a waterfall. His breathing is ragged and irregular, but even his occasional coughing does not slow the scratching of his quill pen.
Nameless One – "Greetings."
Morte – "Whoa, chief! What are you doing?!"
1. "I was going to speak with this scribe. He might know something about how I got here."
6

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

■ Rightly considered to be one of the greatest Western RPGs of all time, *Torment* is another classic *D&D* game that you can easily play today thanks to Beamdog. Acclaimed on release for its exceptional storytelling and memorable characters, it still impresses today. If it wasn't for *Baldur's Gate III*, we'd probably say it's the GOAT of *D&D* games.

POOL OF RADIANCE

■ Sure it features outdated rules, stick-like sprites and some extremely egregious game mechanics, but we still have a soft spot for Strategic Simulation Inc's first *D&D* game. It still manages to build a decent mood, there's a good range of classic enemies to fight and it's the first *D&D* computer game to take place in the popular Forgotten Realms setting.

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

■ Snowblind Studios' action RPG is essentially a *D&D* take on *Diablo* and it's a very good one at that. Based on the *3rd Edition* ruleset, it may be low on character classes (only three are available) but it makes up for that with a solid story, excellent boss encounters and plenty of Forgotten Realms lore. It's currently available on all modern systems.

RAVENLOFT: STRAHD'S POSSESSION

■ This one is more of a guilty pleasure, mainly because Darran adores the *Ravenloft* campaign setting so much. It's another 3D dungeon crawler, but there's a great story at its core and some admittedly clumsy game mechanics. It's extremely atmospheric though and does an excellent job at capturing *Ravenloft*'s oppressive sense of dread.

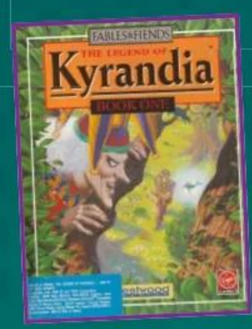
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

■ There have been numerous online interpretations of *Dungeons & Dragons* over the years, but BioWare's *Neverwinter Nights* is easily our favourite. Inspired by the earlier online *D&D* game of the same name, it was astonishingly creative for its time due to a rich campaign setting, solid multiplayer options and the ability to create your own adventures.

THE MAKING OF

THE LEGEND OF Kyrandia

HISTORY REMEMBERS WESTWOOD STUDIOS AS THE MAKERS OF RTS MONUMENTS SUCH AS DUNE II AND COMMAND & CONQUER. BUT THERE WAS ALSO A TIME FREE OF BASE BUILDING AND TIBERIUM WARS – A TIME WHEN WESTWOOD CREATED CLASSICS LIKE THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA



IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN GAMES
- **DEVELOPER:** WESTWOOD STUDIOS
- **PLATFORM:** PC, AMIGA, VARIOUS
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE

WORDS BY PAUL KAUTZ

Westwood Studios, founded in 1985 by Brett Sperry and Louis Castle in Las Vegas under the name Westwood Associates, had very humble beginnings. Early on, it was mainly a conversion company, bringing Epyx's *Temple Of Apshai* games to Amiga and Atari ST, for example. Later, the team developed the legendary first two games of the *Eye Of The Beholder* trilogy for SSI, and shortly afterwards created *Dune II: Battle For Arrakis*, and with it the RTS genre as we know it today. And there was also an adventure series in the company's portfolio: *The Legend Of Kyrandia*.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DUNE II: BATTLE FOR ARRAKIS

PLATFORM: AMIGA, PC, MEGA DRIVE, RISC OS

RELEASED: 1992

LANDS OF LORE: THE THRONE OF CHAOS (PICTURED)

PLATFORM: PC, FM TOWNS, NEC PC-9801

RELEASED: 1993

COMMAND & CONQUER

PLATFORM: PC, VARIOUS

RELEASED: 1995

Mike Legg

■ Mike was the game's lead programmer and main designer. After the closure of Westwood in 2003, he cofounded Petroglyph, which he spearheads to this day.

Louis Castle

■ Louis was one of the founders of Westwood Studios and in one way or another involved in most of its games. He's still very active in the world of computer and videogames.

Brett Sperry

■ Brett was the cofounder of Westwood and *Kyrandia*'s director. After the demise of Westwood he focussed on fine art, and is now a big figure in the Las Vegas arts community.

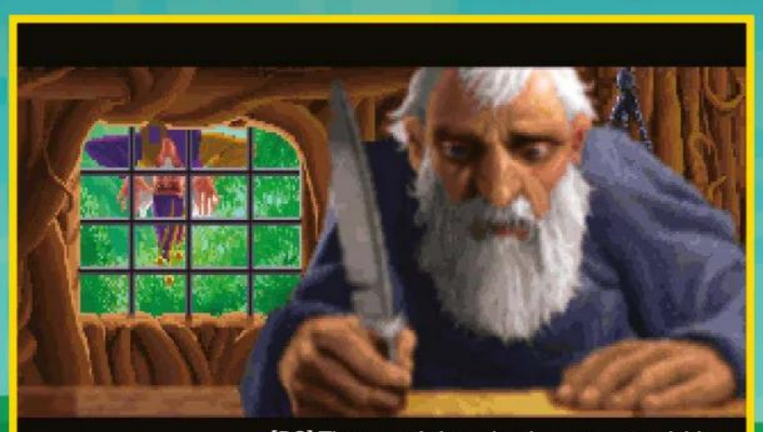
The full name of the game released in the late summer of 1992 under Virgin Games was *Fables & Fiends – The Legend of Kyrandia: Book One*. Originally the name was supposed to be much shorter, as game director Brett Sperry tells us. "The original game was going to be *Fables & Fiends: Kyrandia*. That was it. Then the people at Virgin said, 'We don't know what *Kyrandia* is and there should be more storytelling in the name.' There was a lot of discussion and debate. They proposed the name *The Legend Of Kyrandia* because it is a kind of a legendary fairy tale story, and I was OK with that. So the *Fables & Fiends* part got small and quiet."

The Legend Of Kyrandia was developed by a small team led by lead programmer and head designer Mike Legg, who tells us, "During those days, we usually only had one or two programmers per project, and the programmer did a lot of the design work, coordinating with other team members. We had *Lands Of Lore*, *Dune II* and *Kyrandia* in development at the same time, so we shared core technology (called WWLib) across the games. For design, there was collaboration with the rest of the team, especially Rick Parks (lead artist), Paul Mudra (audio director), and Brett Sperry (director). We put in a lot of long hours and weekends working on it, but we loved what we were doing."

» [PC] Brandon is the hero of the game. Involuntary at first, quite cocky later on.

According to Mike, the development of the game and the technologies required for it took about two years and went without any major problems. "It was actually simpler to visually implement than past PC games. We didn't have to support the CGA and EGA graphics modes, and could focus on MCGA/VGA mode, with 256 colours. We were creating a new game engine for point-and-click adventures, though, that did come with plenty of challenges."

Of course, many ideas fell by the wayside during development. Early screenshots show a magic amulet with room for six spells instead of four. There are a number of items and rooms that are finished but serve no function. And on the beautiful packaging of the European and American game versions, drawn by Roger Loveless, the hero Brandon is talking to a fairy – which doesn't exist in the game. Mike explains this as follows, "Some of the art that got created was intended to have puzzles and/or story attached to them, but then ended up not being implemented in time. Since the scenes looked beautiful, we kept them in. At one point we did have a fairy (with LOTS of sparkles) in one of the caves, but it didn't end up being part of the final game. There were a lot more extra things we discussed doing, and had plenty of other ideas. But we had a release deadline and so we put in as much as we could. It would be fun to create a remake or extended edition some day, and get those ideas in." ▶



» [PC] The game's introduction was astonishing back then, and still manages to look good today.

» [PC] Malcolm is a wonderfully cheeky villain. A murderer and a maniac, yes, but also quite funny.

» [PC] *Kyrandia* is a place of magic. Your shiny amulet gives you the power to control it.

"IT WOULD BE FUN TO CREATE AN EXTENDED EDITION SOME DAY"
Mike Legg

THE LEGEND BEFORE THE LEGEND

THE HUMBLE ROOTS OF THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA

Kyrandia: Fantasy World Of Legends is a multiplayer adventure (MUD) developed by Richard Skurnick and Scott Brinker in 1988, which already provided much of what would later be found in *The Legend Of Kyrandia*: the repetitive forests, the great willow, the ruby tree with a biting snake, lots of gems and the Kyragem amongst other things.

The Westwood staff loved this game, as Mike tells us, "Back in the late-Eighties and early Nineties, there was a local Las Vegas multiuser BBS, called Multicom. Quite a few of us used to log in and chat with other users, as well as play text-based games. *Kyrandia* was one of those games, the text descriptions of the locations were very evocative, and the gameplay was quite fun. We decided to get the rights to the game, and went about making a beautiful graphic version for PC. We weren't finding the fun in just running around and battling against AI wizards, so we pivoted and turned it into a graphics adventure."

The whole thing almost had an unhappy ending, as Louis remembers. "Westwood contacted the author of the *Kyrandia* MUD, paid for the rights, and carefully documented the transaction. Years later, a company who had bought all rights from the *Kyrandia* author's prior work, saw the *Kyrandia* game being advertised and incorrectly presumed we had inappropriately used their IP. When legal discovery was conducted, the case was dismissed with prejudice since Westwood was able to prove we had paid for the rights."

If you would like to try it out for yourself, you can do so at telnetbbsguide.com/bbs/kyrandia

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Press ENTER to begin>


Welcome, brave and adventurous one, to the wondrous and magical game of
Kyrandia, Fantasy World of Legends!!  You are about to journey to a fantasy
land far, far away... a land of swords and sorcery where the only limit is
your own imagination.

You will travel to the world of Kyrandia, a fairy tale land of magic and
mystery, realm of the beautiful and powerful goddess of Kyrandia, Tashanna,
the "Lady of Legends."  Here, you begin as a young apprentice from a small
village who seeks to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and power, with high hopes
of being granted the title of "Arch-Mage of Legends" -- the mightiest wizard
of Kyrandia!  To achieve your goal, you must cross the lands of Kyrandia,
face unknown perils, solve mystical enigmas, battle rivalrous mages, and
conqueror your own mind, body, and soul.

Time has stood still for too long on Kyrandia -- now is the time for one
mage to rise above and master the powers of sorcery and magic.


Press ENTER to continue>_
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cannot see its origin.
There is a garnet lying on the path.
>take garnet
...It's yours!
>north
...You're at a "T" intersection on a path.  In a small clearing of the dark
forest here a narrow north/south path intersects with a smooth road that leads
off to the east.  Although it seems the road may have at one time extended
further to the west, it has long since been overgrown by dark forest.  The
sunlight seems particularly bright here, especially in contrast to the dark
forest which surrounds you.  For some unknown reason, as you look around,
memories run through your mind of long lost love.
There is a garnet lying in the dirt.
>take garnet
...It's yours!
>west
...You're in a dark forest.  Tall, ominous pine trees surround you, their
thick, bristly branches hanging down and making it difficult to proceed in
any direction.  Almost all of the sunlight is blocked out by the densely
packed trees, and the few rays which do filter down create dark, menacing
shadows which seem to dance along the leafy forest floor.  As you glance
around, this location appears to be very similar to the rest of the forest,
making it confusing to determine your exact location.
There is a garnet and a garnet lying on the forest floor.
>_
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So, what is *The Legend Of Kyrandia* about? At the heart of the story is the mad jester Malcolm, who murders the king and queen, steals the important Kyragem and turns Kallak, the most powerful mystic in the land, to stone. Now it's up to Kallak's grandson Brandon to stop the mad clown and restore peace to the lands. Malcolm, who was originally to be called Ratcliffe and whose final name was derived from the Latin word malus (meaning bad or evil), has quite a weird origin story, according to Mike. "Louis Castle and Barry Green were amateur jugglers, and had travelled to the Utah Shakespeare Festival to perform as jesters," he reveals. "Apparently they were not registered as official performers, causing concern by the festival officials. I was delighted by this, and then wanted to make a themed arcade game, called *Rogue Jester*. I never got a chance to create it, though. As we got into making *Kyrandia*, we discussed villain ideas and the Rogue Jester came to mind as a character who could cause a lot of mayhem and chaos – thus Malcolm was born!"

> "BE CAREFUL, PAY ATTENTION, BE THOUGHTFUL, BECAUSE ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES"
> **Brett Sperry**

The Legend Of Kyrandia is all about the magic. After a short time in the game, Brandon unlocks a shiny amulet that will be eventually filled with four different spells: Heal, Disenchant, Transform Into A Will-o-Wisp (a glowing purple orb) and finally Invisibility. There is also a Frost spell, which can only be obtained from a magic scroll. Conjuring this magic is as simple as it gets, as all actions throughout the game require only the left mouse button. There are no verbs, icons or multi-part actions. Click on an object and you hold it in your virtual hand, whereupon you can either use it directly or have Brandon examine it. Click on a person, you will talk to them. Click into the landscape and Brandon will go there. These simplifications, however, do have some disadvantages, as can be seen from the fact that there are no multiple choice dialogues throughout the adventure, while the reduced controls limit the creativity of the game's puzzles.

The vast majority of puzzles rely on trial and error, the most notorious of which is the Serpent's Grotto, the centrepiece of Chapter 2. It's a sprawling, complex labyrinth of over 80 rooms that you have to traverse in its entirety, as it not only leads to the next chapter, but also contains some of the items you will need there. The vast majority of these rooms are pitch black – and when Brandon enters one of them, more and more sinister eyes appear, a very painful-sounding scream echoes through the darkness and the words, "Rest in peace, Brandon," mark the premature ending of the game.

In order to avoid this, there are so-called Fireberry Bushes every few rooms. These bear flaming fruit, which you place in a room to keep it permanently lit. The only problem with the berries is that their flames will only last for three screens – as you move from room to room with them, the light will diminish and eventually die out completely. So what you need to do now is stop carrying

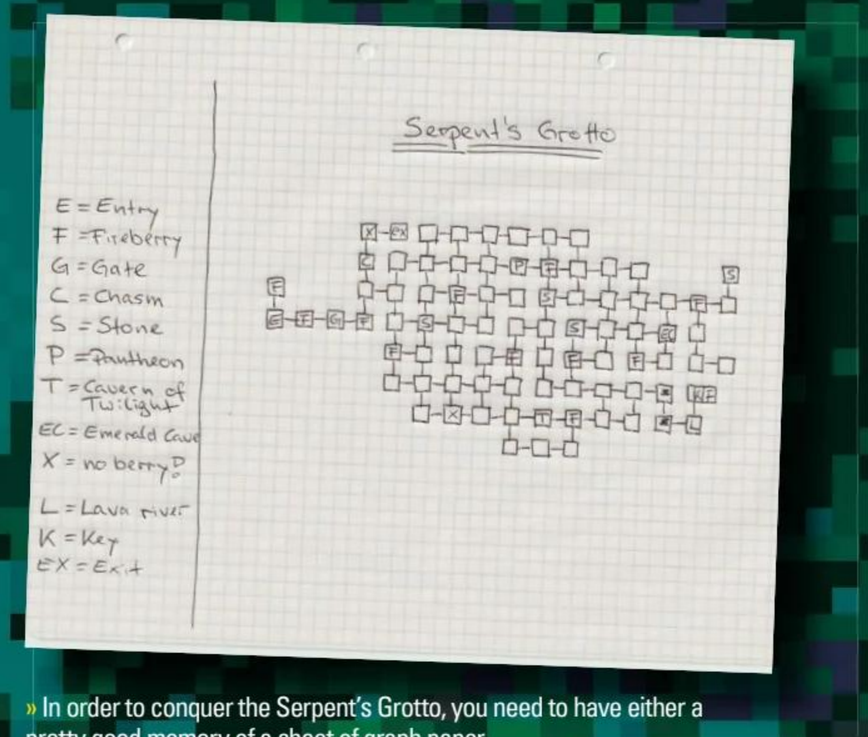
» [PC] The very first version of the game featured a tiny bit of cursing. Later versions completely omitted it.

Fireberries around in your inventory and instead create a trail of them throughout the maze. Also it helps if you draw a map of the maze the old-fashioned way on graph paper, if you happen to not have a photographic memory.

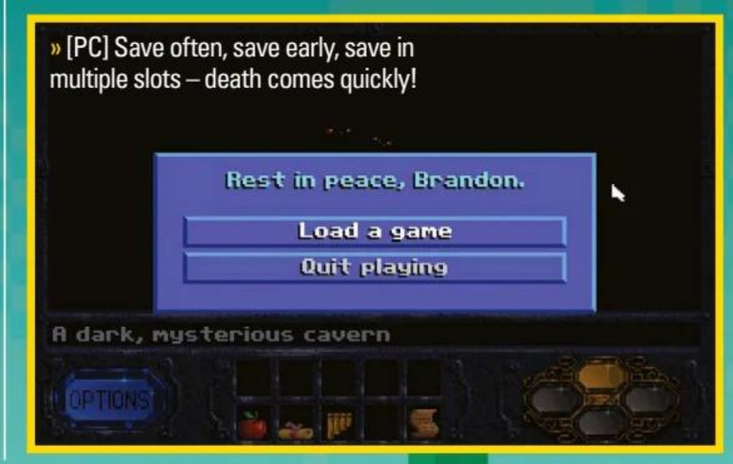
Brett feels a bit guilty about the sections like these that appear in the game. "You know, that was the spirit of the time. You play these adventure games and you may have to start over. So be careful, pay attention, be thoughtful, because actions have consequences. That's one answer, and it's true. But there's another one, and that was running against a deadline and getting the game done. Sometimes you see where designers try to create maybe a little bit more content or make the game a bit tougher and take longer, because one of the big fears was, if people play this right, they're going to get through the game in eight or ten hours. I wanted that team to have more freedom. So I said, 'If you guys really want to do this and put this stuff in here, go for it.' But in the end, it wasn't as elegant a game design as it could have been."

One result of all of this is that *The Legend Of Kyrandia* can easily give Sierra adventures a run for their money in terms of spontaneity and frequency of death, as there are many ways to die here. If you try to cross an unfinished bridge – dead. If you provoke Malcolm a little too much at the entrance to the Serpent's Grotto – dead. If you try to pet the giant frog outside Zanthia's hut – dead. A wrongly mixed potion – dead. If you take a step too far into the lava cave without protecting yourself with a Frost spell – well, what do you think? Incidentally, the first version of the game showed Brandon screaming, "Oh shit!" at this moment, which Mike recalls amusedly. "It was late one night after we all got back from dinner. Two Westwood culprits, we'll call them CDY and BWS, came up with the idea, and did not officially condone it, but thought it would be funny. Well, we did it, and it shipped in the original 3.5-inch floppy version. However, there was some concern about it later, so we reworded it in the following versions."

Much worse than the many deaths, however, is the fact that *The Legend Of Kyrandia* has a couple of plot stoppers that can completely ruin your progress in the game. Number one has to do with the apples, of which there are exactly two in the whole game. You carry these around with you all the time without being able to do anything with them. If you click on one and then on Brandon, he will eat it without comment, leaving only the grub in your inventory. Toward the end of the third



» In order to conquer the Serpent's Grotto, you need to have either a pretty good memory of a sheet of graph paper.



» [PC] Save often, save early, save in multiple slots – death comes quickly!

» [PC] The lush VGA graphics are the main attraction of *Kyrandia*. Every frame is a painting.

THE LEGEND CONTINUES

HOW THE CD VERSION MADE KYRANDIA EVEN MORE MAGICAL

About a year after its original release, *The Legend Of Kyrandia* was also released on CD-ROM. As was the norm back then, English speech was the main filler of the mighty 700MB! The quality of the voice-over was surprisingly high for the time, also Brandon is voiced by Joe Kucan – an actor we would learn to love and fear as NOD leader Kane in the *Command & Conquer* games. Brett remembers this time well, saying, "I loved when we did the CD-ROM version, I loved hearing the voices. That's how Joe Kucan got involved. I knew Joe and what he was doing in the Las Vegas theatre scene. Every now and then he would help us do voice-overs which led to us offering him a full-time position. That was his entry into computer games. Just being an actor and trying to breathe life into Brandon. I love that, that was a big step for us."

The CD release was also used for bug fixes and game tweaks. For example, the Serpent's Grotto is much easier in the CD version than in the original floppy-disk release, as there are more Fireberry Bushes available. There was even some space left on the disc, which was filled with the whopping 2.7 MB demo of *Dune II: Battle For Arrakis*.

» [PC] The game is chock-full of quirky characters like mystic Darm and his snarky pet dragon Brandywine.

» [PC] *Kyrandia* originally featured many more scenes and items (like this ankh) that were left unused in the final game.

chapter, however, you will meet a little faun who wants "something good" from you in exchange for the Royal Chalice. If you do not carry an uneaten apple at this point, the game will be impossible to finish.

Plot stopper number two appears a bit later. For the grand finale against Malcolm, you must travel to a dark island. To do this, you need to turn into a flying horse, which can only be done using an orange potion, which you have to mix from alchemy crystals in a very time-consuming manner. Once you have done that, you can fly off immediately. There is no reason for you to have a flower in your inventory at this point. Or the Royal Chalice, which you can't have if you've already run into the apple problem. Or the key, which you could easily have overlooked in the Serpent's Grotto. In short, it's very easy not to have any of these items with you. Unfortunately, you need them all.

The problem is that once you're on the island, you'll transform back to Brandon, the potion is gone, you can't make another one – there's no way back. Without the flower, you can't talk to the ghost of Brandon's mother, who will give you the final spell you need to get past the deadly gargoyles at the castle's gate. Without the key, you won't be able to unlock that gate. And without the chalice, you cannot open the door to the Kyragem chamber, where the grand finale takes place.

The thing is: it's surprisingly easy to forgive these blunders because the game is just so beautiful! Westwood had an incredible 2D pixel style at the time, which was already evident in the two *Eye Of The Beholder* games, and then perfected in games like *Lands Of Lore* and *The Legend Of Kyrandia*. The meadows are lush and beautifully drawn, the trees look wonderfully gnarled and organic, locations like the entrance to the Serpent's Grotto show absurd amounts of detail, the transformation into the flying horse is breathtakingly beautiful.

We have to thank Robert Richter 'Rick' Parks (who sadly passed away far too young in 1996) for most of this, and Brett recalls that his start at Westwood was a bit shaky. "At the time he was making something like $100,000 a year or more selling paintings. He was very candid, he said he wanted to get into computer graphics. And I said, 'We can't do it. We're still a young company, we can't pay six-figure salaries.' So we turned him down. However, he came back a month or two later and said, 'What if you paid me half?' It's still a bit much for a visual artist back then but eventually Louis worked out a deal because Rick wanted it so badly. I was surprised how quickly he took up digital computer graphics – it blew my mind. He was brilliant and he started using colours in a way that a lot of other artists on our team at that time were not."

If you play *The Legend Of Kyrandia* again today, or for the first time, you will experience a wonderful, imaginative adventure that has some rough edges, a great villain and a fascinating world that you can immerse yourself in for days on end. Something that many players have done with their families, as Brett remembers. "We got all these letters from people saying, 'Thank you so much for making a game I can play with my daughter or my son. They love Brandon. They love clicking.' So we had young kids who were playing it with their parents and it was their first adventure game ever. And then we had regular gamers who were just looking for something casual and light and fun, and they loved the graphics and the setting. It was a game that had a lot of charm."

Louis has also nothing but the best memories of *Kyrandia*'s development, saying, "Westwood was a magical place, fed by the wit and mischievousness of Mike Legg, Dwight Okahara, Rick Gush and so many others. Apart from the ongoing nearly daily pranks, the clearest memory I have of developing *Kyrandia* is the stunningly beautiful art made by the late great Rick Parks. He set a very high bar for all Westwood games and I will be forever indebted to him and our amazing art team. I love the memories and nostalgia invoked and think of all the great people that made the games we loved to make and play. Thank you to all gamers past and present that provide an audience for our indulgences." ✱

In memory of Rick 'Coco' Gush.

» [PC] The Fireberries are the only things that keep the darkness away in the Serpent's Grotto.

"WESTWOOD WAS A MAGICAL PLACE"
Louis Castle

» [PC] A thick tree, shimmering ruby fruits, a big DANGER sign – what could possibly go wrong here?

» [PC] Unfortunately, *Kyrandia* is full of plot stoppers. Hint: don't eat the apple!

BEYOND KYRANDIA

THE LATER GAMES IN WESTWOOD'S SERIES

The Legend Of Kyrandia: Hand Of Fate (1993)

There was a reason for the 'Book One' in *Fables & Fiends: Legend Of Kyrandia Book One*, because about a year after the original game, *Book Two*, subtitled *Hand Of Fate*, was already in stores. This time, the focus was no longer on Brandon, but on the young mystic Zanthia, who had to stop Kyrandia from disappearing. *Hand Of Fate* offers more of everything: more game world, more variety, more graphics, more sound, more comedy. At the same time, there are fewer sudden deaths, fewer obscure puzzles, and less Malcolm – in fact, he plays no part at all until the very last scene. Zanthia also acts like a normal person for a change, putting on appropriate clothing when she enters a new scenario with a different climate.

The Legend Of Kyrandia: Malcolm's Revenge (1994)

While Malcolm was under-represented in the second game, the same could not be said for the third, as it was all about him, making him the unexpected hero. In terms of content, this game follows in the footsteps of its predecessors, but the use of rendered graphics sets it apart visually. Which hasn't particularly aged well, as Louis admits, "By *Kyrandia 3* it was a natural approach for us to use 3D graphics which were visually so exciting back then. The early 3D graphics may seem crude by today's standards, but in the early Nineties the look was cutting edge. I stand by the choice of the team to go for the new look, although I'll always have a love for hand-crafted art."

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Super Smash Bros

» **PLATFORM:** NINTENDO 64 » **RELEASED:** 1999 » **DEVELOPER:** HAL LABORATORY

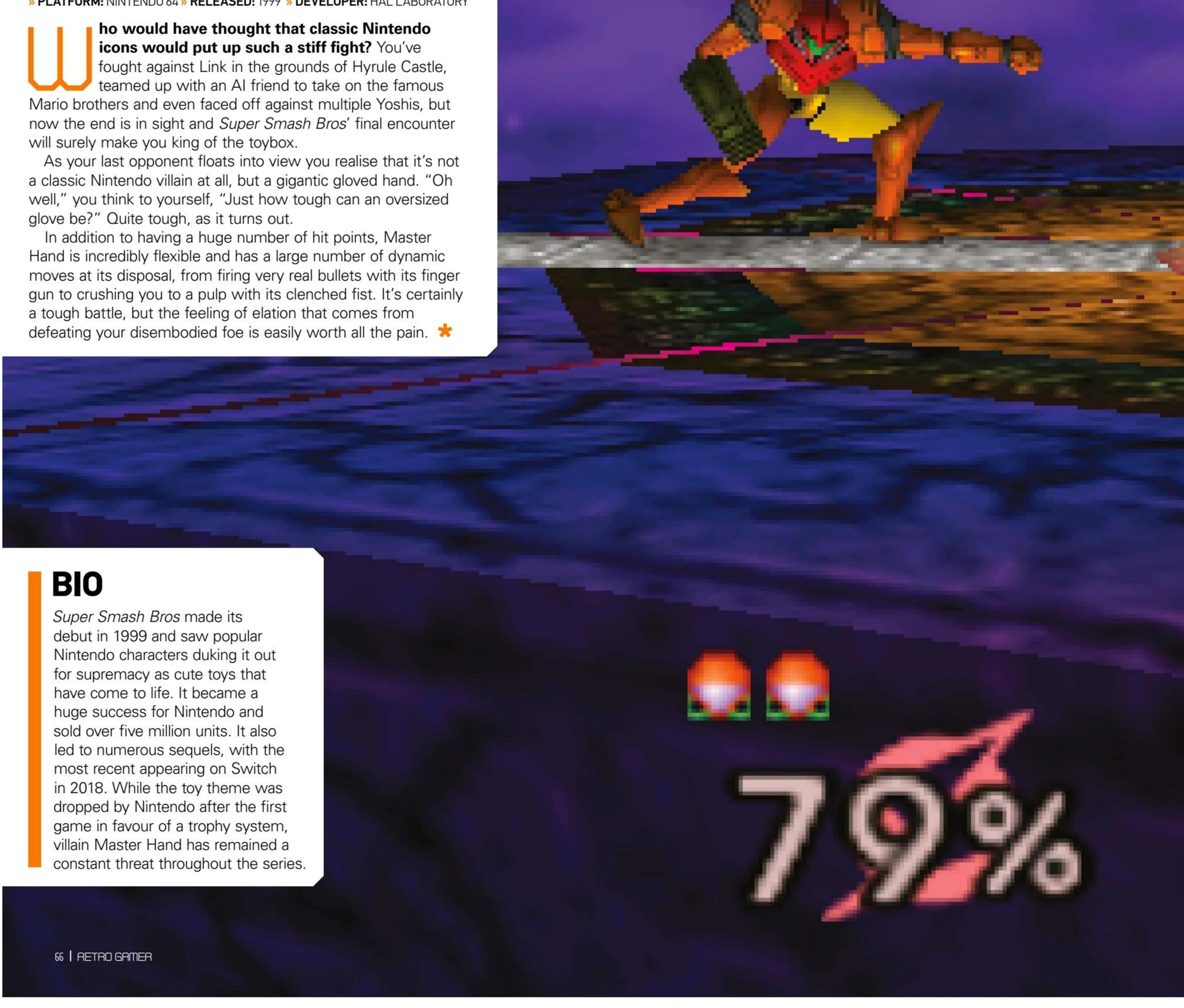
Who would have thought that classic Nintendo icons would put up such a stiff fight? You've fought against Link in the grounds of Hyrule Castle, teamed up with an AI friend to take on the famous Mario brothers and even faced off against multiple Yoshis, but now the end is in sight and *Super Smash Bros*' final encounter will surely make you king of the toybox.

As your last opponent floats into view you realise that it's not a classic Nintendo villain at all, but a gigantic gloved hand. "Oh well," you think to yourself, "Just how tough can an oversized glove be?" Quite tough, as it turns out.

In addition to having a huge number of hit points, Master Hand is incredibly flexible and has a large number of dynamic moves at its disposal, from firing very real bullets with its finger gun to crushing you to a pulp with its clenched fist. It's certainly a tough battle, but the feeling of elation that comes from defeating your disembodied foe is easily worth all the pain. ✱

BIO

Super Smash Bros made its debut in 1999 and saw popular Nintendo characters duking it out for supremacy as cute toys that have come to life. It became a huge success for Nintendo and sold over five million units. It also led to numerous sequels, with the most recent appearing on Switch in 2018. While the toy theme was dropped by Nintendo after the first game in favour of a trophy system, villain Master Hand has remained a constant threat throughout the series.



MORE CLASSIC SUPER SMASH BROS MOMENTS

Ganging Up

As you progress through Story Mode you'll encounter a gigantic Donkey Kong that towers over you. The humongous simian proves such a handful that you're assisted by two AI-controlled teammates. Even then, he remains quite the challenge to defeat.

All The Kirbies

While *Super Smash Bros* has you battle multiple opponents at once, none compare with the avalanche of Kirbies you face later in the game. It's a truly manic battle made even more chaotic by *Gourmet Race* playing along in the background.

It's Hammer Time

One of the highlights of *Super Smash Bros* is the many weapons you can find throughout the game. One of our favourites is easily the hammer which not only packs a punch but plays the invincibility music from *Donkey Kong* as you wield it.

Strike A Pose

With so much happening at once, fights in *Super Smash Bros* can become quite overwhelming. Pressing Start will not only pause the game, but take you to a cool little extra where you can pan around your character in more detail.

ULTIMATE GUIDE

DIE HARD Arcade

JUST WHEN ALL THE BEAT-'EM-UPS SEEMED TO HAVE GONE HOME, DIE HARD ARCADE SWAGGERED THROUGH THE DOOR SPORTING 3D GRAPHICS AND AN AWESOME ARRAY OF MOVES AND WEAPONS. IN THE TIMELESS WORDS OF JOHN MCCLANE, WELCOME TO THE PARTY PAL

WORDS BY GRAHAM PEMBREY

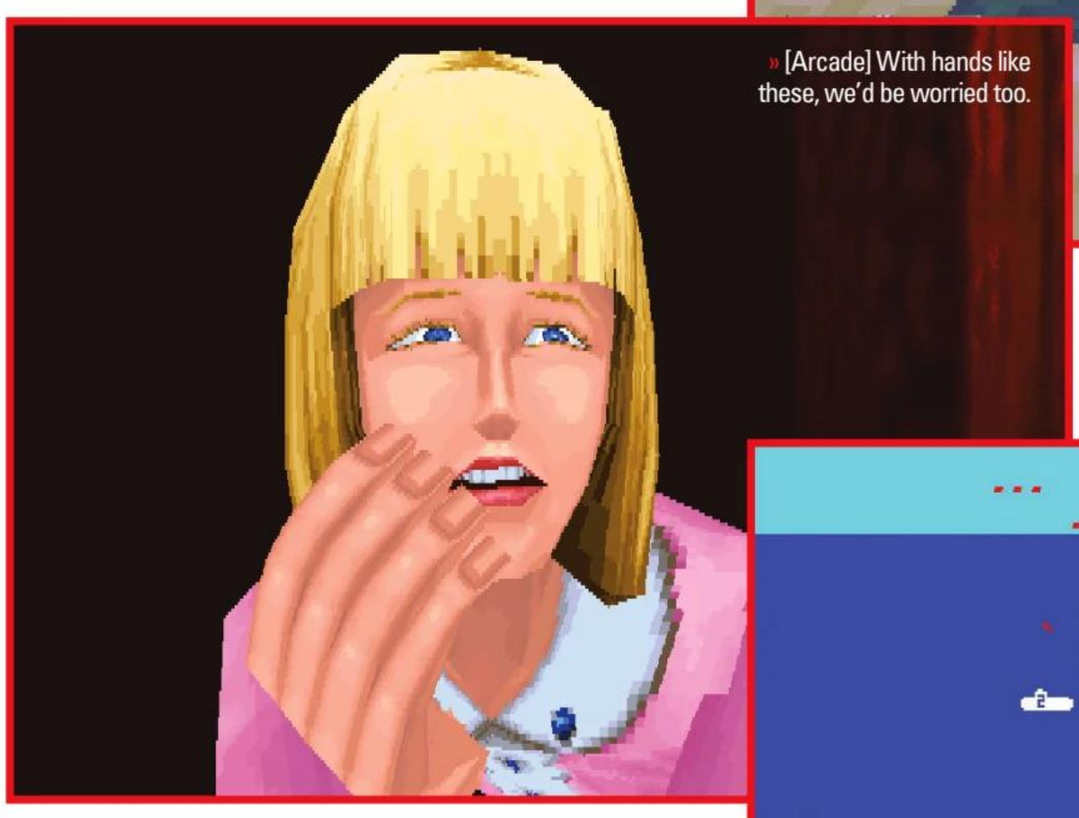
Given the immense success *Die Hard* had at the box office in 1988, you might have expected a licensed arcade machine to follow soon after. It seemed like the perfect material for a money-eating action game: a heroic everyman cop, hostages to rescue, bad guys to neutralise and massive explosions emerging left, right and centre. And yet despite a handful of home-computer and console games bearing the name of the film in the early Nineties, it was eight years before coin-op fans had *Die Hard Arcade* to enjoy. Owners of the latest Sega console were also in luck, as the simultaneously released Sega Saturn version was close to arcade perfect. Oddly enough, though, the game was originally not intended to have anything to do with the film.

The roots of *Die Hard Arcade* can be traced back to a string of classic side-scrolling beat-'em-ups. Game designer Makoto Uchida and his team at Sega AM1 were responsible for *Altered Beast*, *Golden Axe* and *Alien Storm*. Acknowledging that more of the same 2D action might fall flat in 1996, they travelled to the US where they collaborated with artists and designers at the Sega Technical Institute (STI) to adopt the style of rendered 3D that had worked so well in Yu Suzuki's *Virtua Fighter*. "We didn't want people to feel we were just making another side-scrolling brawler," Uchida

» [Arcade] Cutscenes show gang leader White Fang orchestrating his building heist.

» [Saturn] Facing down baddies with our weapon of choice, a grandfather clock.

"MAKOTO UCHIDA KNEW HE WANTED TO MAKE A GAME LIKE HIS PREVIOUS HIT, GOLDEN AXE"
STIEG HEDLUND



» [Arcade] With hands like these, we'd be worried too.

told *Sega Saturn Magazine* in a 1997 interview. He added that he realised the genre had fallen "a bit out of fashion".

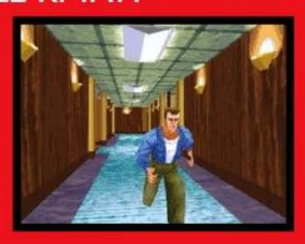
Sega sought to revitalise the format by setting the action into texture-mapped 3D. This was groundbreaking among beat-'em-ups. Another innovation was including a hugely expanded moveset and a wide range of weaponry. Combinations of the basic punch, kick and jump controls will lead to all sorts of throws and extravagant combo attacks in a manner more akin to a fighting game. In total, we count 36 possible attacks, including a relatively pacifist manoeuvre where you can approach enemies from behind and arrest them by placing them in handcuffs. Weapons include some of the melee accessories you might expect (like iron bars) plus a multitude of guns and some far more bombastic choices (lobbing a massive grandfather clock at enemies is a highlight).

» [Saturn] 1979 submarine shooter *Deep Scan* is playable in the Saturn game.

CONVERSION CAPERS

WHICH VERSION GETS THE BIGGEST YIPPEE-KI-YAY?

ARCADE



■ Developed for the Sega Titan Video (ST-V) arcade board, the coin-op game is that tiny bit slicker and faster than the console incarnation. This is most noticeable in the quick transitions between cutscenes and the main action. The relaxed difficulty level means you can get good value from a single credit.

SATURN

■ The ST-V hardware was shared with the Saturn, so this version of *Die Hard Arcade* is close to arcade perfect. The options menu allows you to turn on 'violence', which mainly just introduces blood splatters. While it may not have as much longevity as other Saturn games, it's a fun pick-up-and-play experience.

PLAYSTATION 2

■ An enhanced and remade *Die Hard Arcade* arrived on the PlayStation 2 ten years after the arcade and Saturn releases, as part of the *Sega Ages* series. It boasts shiny new graphics (including a main character who actually resembles Bruce Willis) and new gameplay modes. It's arguably the ultimate version.

ARTIST Q&A

STIEG HEDLUND ON BEING LEAD ARTIST AND DESIGNER FOR DIE HARD ARCADE

What led to you working on *Die Hard Arcade*?
Before joining Sega Technical Institute (STI), I had already been working in games for about five years. I had worked at Koei (now Koei-Tecmo) and Electronic Arts, on a variety of PC and console games. My experience living and working in Japan made me a strong candidate for the studio, since many team members were Japanese expats. STI's impressive talent pool also attracted me, so it was a good fit.

What games did you work on?
At STI, I worked on *Comix Zone*, *The Ooze* and an early incarnation of *Sonic X-treme*, and pitched several projects for the Sega Saturn. I had earned trust and proved my adaptability, so when AM1 needed a team for *Die Hard Arcade*, they asked me to join.

What was your role and was it a fun project?
I'd been dragooning as a designer and artist in all my roles to that point. For the *Die Hard Arcade* team, I was tapped as lead artist and designer. It was fun, but there was a lot to learn for all of us! Lead designer Makoto Uchida knew he wanted to make a game like his previous hit, *Golden Axe*, taking inspiration from *Die Hard* for its setting. But there were a lot of unknowns in realising it in 3D, which neither AM1 nor STI had experience with, though our art team had training in 3D. We used the *Virtua Fighter* tools AM2 had developed – among others. But we needed to explore cameras, controls, how the art and animation could work, etc. I love a challenge, and worked to quickly tackle the design issues and to bring Joe Stephenson's exceptional concept art to life.

Did you work on the arcade and Saturn games separately?
No, *Die Hard Arcade* ran on Sega's Titan Video System, or ST-V, which was the coin-op equivalent of the Saturn architecture. The ability to make one game for both platforms was part of the plan. It's definitely unfair the STI team was cut out of the credits for the Saturn version.

Do you still get asked about the game often?
It's not my best-known game, but once in a while I'll mention it and someone will tell me how much fun they had pumping all their quarters into it. I always strive to make games I'll be proud of, and we vastly over-performed Sega's expectations for the game.

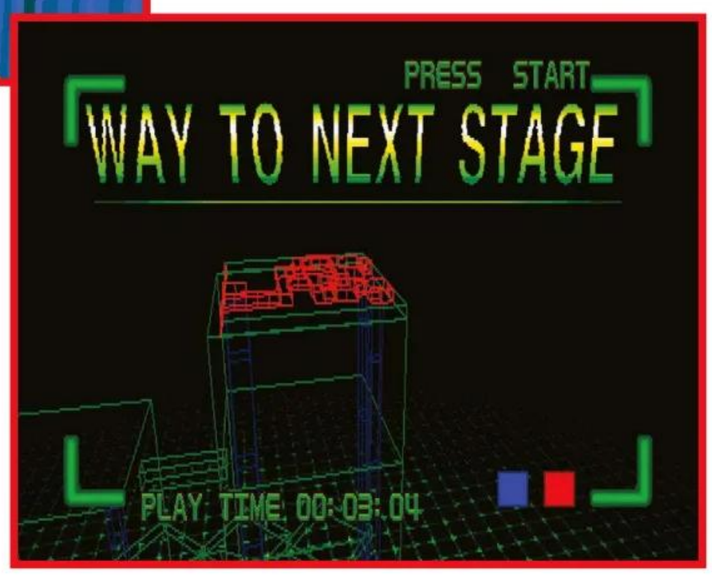
As you descend through the Nakatomi building on a mission to save the kidnapped daughter of the corporation's president, stages are bookended by interactive cutscenes. A well-timed press of punch, kick or jump (in an almost *Dragon's Lair* style) can dictate whether you need to fight extra enemies. Uchida told *Sega Saturn Magazine* that the intention of these scenes was to make the game more cinematic. "I thought it would be interesting to show the transition between scenes during the action and to make it as close to an action movie as possible," Uchida explained. "To fight with visuals that are more movie-like than anything before, that was the basic idea."

For all that creating cinematic moments was always part of Uchida's plan, making a game based on *Die Hard* was an afterthought. Sega acquired the rights to use the *Die Hard* licence in America at a point when development was already in progress. Quickly rebranding, it made *Die Hard* the focus of the US game release, working together with Fox Interactive. Those rights didn't extend to Japan, though, meaning the Japanese game was released as *Dynamite Deka* with all *Die Hard* references stripped away. Even when you play the US version, the connection to the film of the same name feels quite tenuous. The main character barely resembles Bruce Willis for a start, while the enemies include an

» [Arcade] Now that's just taking the piss… or it's good chance to arrest somebody rather than hitting them for a change.

assortment of street punks, sumo wrestlers and martial arts experts with little resemblance to the gang members of the film. Fortunately, this odd tonal dissonance adds to the light-hearted appeal of the action. There's a real tongue-in-cheek vibe to the outrageous enemies and over-the-top weapons in the game, and frequent moments of hilarity. It's certainly not a game that takes itself too seriously.

"WE USED THE VIRTUA FIGHTER TOOLS AM2 HAD DEVELOPED"
STIEG HEDLUND



You can fight through the five main stages of the game as a solo hero, or pair up for two-player co-operation. Just be careful to give each other space; you won't be immune from stray friendly fire and accidental clashes happen easily. As you make progress you'll encounter end-of-stage bosses, culminating in a final showdown against White Fang, the elderly but nimble master criminal holding the president's daughter hostage. After defeating him, the ending can go different ways. In single-player mode you'll simply be thanked by the president's ▶

» [Arcade] Failing QuickTime Events means extra enemies to fight.

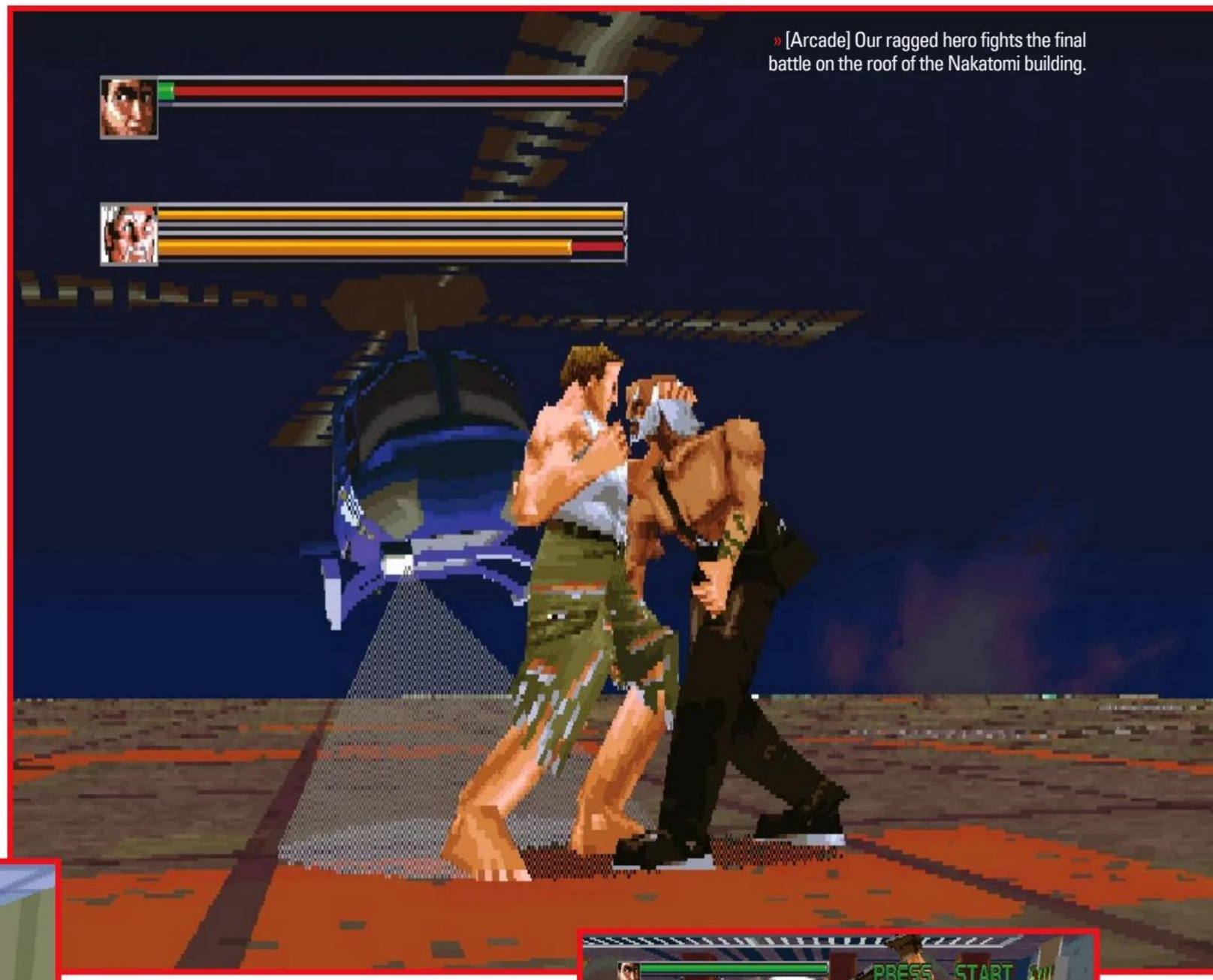
LOST IN TRANSLATION

HOW THE WESTERN AND JAPANESE RELEASES DIFFER

■ Sega lacked the *Die Hard* film licence in Japan and released its new game as *Dynamite Deka*, meaning *Dynamite Detective*. Forget John McClane – our hero here goes by Bruno Delinger. His sidekick is known as Cindy Holiday rather than Kris Thompsen. Most importantly, the building they need to battle through has morphed from Nakatomi Plaza to a tower known as Eternal City, which is found in San Francisco rather than Los Angeles.

That last difference is one of the few that's slightly noticeable if you compare the two versions. Nakatomi Corporation logos have been removed in the Japanese release (below), which creates a few visual distinctions in the stages. Aside from that subtle difference and changes to the names and story, the two games are largely identical, both in their arcade and Saturn forms.

There is one other notable difference in the marketing of the game to mention. Japanese gamers were treated to a bizarre 15-second TV advert, which included a catchy song celebrating some of the more out-there weapons you can pick up in the game. The words roughly translate as, "Do you know of our weapons? A mop, a pendulum clock, pepper! What shall happen today, Dynamite Deka." It's certainly worth a quick watch on YouTube.



» [Arcade] Our ragged hero fights the final battle on the roof of the Nakatomi building.

"DIE HARD ARCADE RAN ON SEGA'S TITAN VIDEO SYSTEM, WHICH WAS THE COIN-OP EQUIVALENT OF THE SATURN ARCHITECTURE"
STIEG HEDLUND

WAS THAT IN THE MOVIE?

FIVE WAYS THE GAME STRAYS FROM THE FILM'S PLOT

WRESTLING MOVES

In this telling of the tale, John McClane seems to have a background as a professional wrestler. Suplexes, piledrivers, elbow drops and swinging criminals in circles by their legs are just some of the WWE-worthy moves on show. Weaponry and martial arts moves are also John's forte.

RAMPAGING ROBOTS

At two points in the game you'll need to get past some high-tech sentry robots with deadly laser-beam attacks. It's not clear what these futuristic sci-fi creations are doing there, or what they have to do with the Nakatomi Corporation, but they certainly add a bit of variety.

PRESIDENTIAL KIDNAP

In the film, the hostages were humble workers putting in a shift at the office just before Christmas. Here there's a VIP at stake – the petrified daughter of the President of the Nakatomi Corporation. Her captor White Fang is also a far cry from Hans Gruber, mean beards aside.

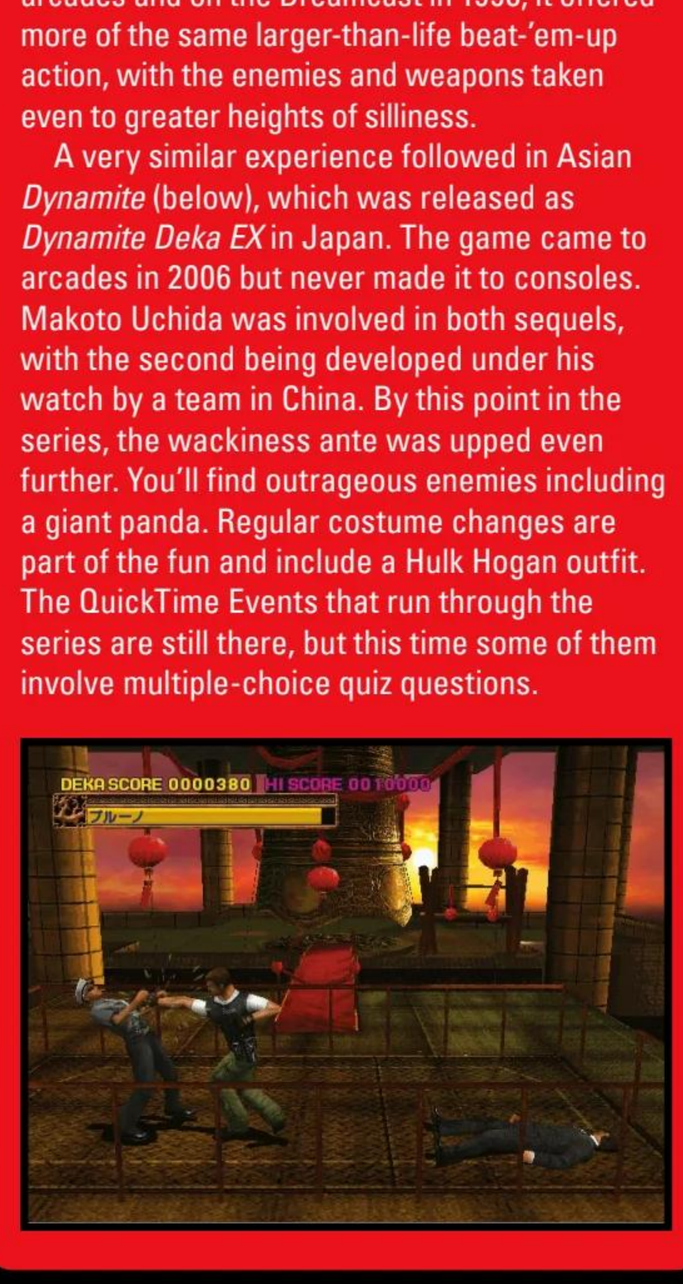
» [Saturn] John McClane pairs up with Kris Thompsen in two-player mode.

» [Saturn] Blood splatters can be turned on in the Saturn version.

daughter. In two-player mode on the other hand, she declares that she wants one of you to be her new bodyguard – and outrageously, she wants you to fight to decide who'll get that honour. You'll square up to one another and see who wins outright. Why you couldn't simply flip a coin and shake hands, we'll never know. Nonetheless, it's a fun competitive twist at the end of an otherwise co-operative playthrough.

Throughout the five stages the difficulty is balanced and forgiving compared to most arcade games. While that feels refreshing for a coin-op, some reviewers lamented that the Saturn game offered too little challenge or replay value. *CVG* remarked that, "If you liked the arcade original, this is a spot-on conversion. Unfortunately these arcade thrills probably won't last you very long." Indeed, while most of us could spend a decent amount of time reaching the ending, the game can be tackled quickly by expert players – speedrunners have managed it in less than 20 minutes. *Edge* also felt the Saturn game was great fun but flawed due to being brief and linear. GameSpot meanwhile embraced the arcade game, calling it "a blast" and "truly the next generation of linear beat-'em-ups". If you do happen to need some extra help before starting a playthrough of the Saturn version, look for *Deep Scan* on the options menu. You can play a port of the 1979 Sega arcade game, and for every 200 points you score, you'll get an extra credit for your next run of *Die Hard Arcade*. It's a fun extra that has shades of the 1993 release of *Ridge Racer* on the PlayStation, in which you play *Galaxian* while waiting for the main game to load.

Die Hard Arcade may not have earned as much console success as *Die Hard Trilogy*, which came to the PlayStation just two months later and the Saturn soon after. But even the most critical of reviewers lauded the ways in which it expanded on the beat-'em-up genre and brought it into a new 3D realm. You would have to have the heart of Hans Gruber not to find it great fun, even if said villain (superbly played by Alan Rickman in the film) is nowhere to be seen here. Whether you want to pick up a Saturn copy or the enhanced PlayStation 2 remake released in Japan a decade later, you'll find copies are very expensive, reflecting the celebrated status *Die Hard Arcade* now enjoys. ✱



DYNAMITE SEQUELS

THE TWO EXPLOSIVE FOLLOW-UPS TO DYNAMITE DEKA

■ Although Sega was done with the *Die Hard* licence, it rustled up two sequels to *Dynamite Deka*. The first of these was called *Dynamite Cop* (top) in the West and *Dynamite Deka 2* in Japan. Players once again found themselves as elite cops in a hostage rescue situation, only this time the setting is a huge ship at sea. Released in arcades and on the Dreamcast in 1998, it offered more of the same larger-than-life beat-'em-up action, with the enemies and weapons taken even to greater heights of silliness.

A very similar experience followed in Asian *Dynamite* (below), which was released as *Dynamite Deka EX* in Japan. The game came to arcades in 2006 but never made it to consoles. Makoto Uchida was involved in both sequels, with the second being developed under his watch by a team in China. By this point in the series, the wackiness ante was upped even further. You'll find outrageous enemies including a giant panda. Regular costume changes are part of the fun and include a Hulk Hogan outfit. The QuickTime Events that run through the series are still there, but this time some of them involve multiple-choice quiz questions.

BROOM BATTLING

■ John McClane gets his hand on a gun and some explosives in the film, but here he gets to wield everything from a broom to a rocket launcher. There's also a pepper spray, which becomes a flame-throwing aerosol with a lighter if you turn on the 'violence' mode in the Saturn version.

GOING COMMANDO

■ Whilst in the film John is an everyman cop who finds himself in the wrong place at the wrong time, here he starts the game intentionally flying in as part of some kind of special forces operation. As well as being a pro-wrestler, he seems to be an elite special forces commando type too.

Virtua Cop 2

SEGA'S SUPER-SLICK SEQUEL

» SATURN » 1996 » SEGA AM2

My first introduction to Sega's Saturn was through Brady Kent, one of my friends from Tesco. Aside from having a cool name, Brady had an impressive number of Saturn games and I'd often go around his house after work to play his latest purchase. Brady's love of the system rubbed off on me and led to me purchasing my own console and I soon fell in love with the machine's arcade-focussed library.

We obviously played a lot of two-player games during our gaming sessions and when we weren't going head to head on *Street Fighter Alpha*, we were playing *Virtua Cop 2*. Converted by Sega AM2, like the original *Virtua Cop*, it's an excellent port that felt virtually arcade perfect at the time.

It certainly doesn't do much to expand the original game's gunplay, but in many ways the first game was so slick that it didn't really seem to matter. What did matter was the arcade game's frantic pace and focus on combo scoring and the Saturn captured this perfectly. Although I owned a lightgun and a copy of *Virtua Cop*, I hadn't gotten around to playing the sequel outside of the arcade, so Brady had a distinct advantage over me.

He'd been playing it so much that he almost always went for the showy Justice Shots (where you disarm an enemy instead of simply shooting them) while I was just happy taking someone out. He was never mean about his obvious superiority with the game though and if anything, his skill pushed me forward to git gud as the kids like to say today.

Sadly, despite a lot of practising I never did git gud and had to simply settle with being a fairly average *Virtua Cop 2* player. I went through something of a lightgun bender earlier in the year, playing games across the PlayStation, Saturn and PS2 and *Virtua Cop 2* and its predecessor obviously made the rotation. If anything, I'm worse now than I ever was, probably because my reflexes are nowhere near as good as when I was in my early 20s. Oh well, I still had a lot of fun.

THE MAKING OF BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

USING JUST A SMALL TEAM, UBISOFT MONTPELLIER MANAGED TO CREATE A VERY UNIQUE VIDEOGAME, DISTINCT FROM THE USUAL PRODUCTION STANDARDS. REACHING POOR SALES IN 2003, A 2011 REMASTER AND A 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION WERE PUBLISHED NEVERTHELESS. WHAT LIES BEHIND SUCH LATE ENTHUSIASM?

WORDS BY GUY MIQUEL-ALBERT

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
- **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE, XBOX, PC
- **RELEASED:** 2003
- **GENRE:** ACTION AND ADVENTURE

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

RAYMAN (PICTURED)

PLATFORM: JAGUAR, PLAYSTATION, SATURN, PC

RELEASED: 1995

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE

PLATFORM: DREAMCAST, PC, NINTENDO 64

RELEASED: 1999

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG : THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE

PLATFORM: XBOX, VARIOUS

RELEASED: 2005

» [GameCube] The characters in *Beyond Good & Evil* are fantastic and genuinely add to the game's charm.

Florent Sacré

» *Beyond Good & Evil*'s lead artist has just published a Bande dessinée album called *Au Chant des Grenouilles*. He's also cofounded Little Big Frog, a small game company.

Christophe Héral

» The acclaimed composer has also worked on *Rayman Legends* and *Origins*, DLC for *Mario + Rabbids: Sparks Of Hope* and is currently composing music for *Beyond Good & Evil 2*

» The very passionate and diverse *Beyond Good & Evil* development team gathered in Montpellier.

Jean-François Le Quéré

» *Beyond Good & Evil*'s level designer currently works for Eko Software, which recently released *Welcome To Paradize*, a top-down shooter with zombies.

After *Rayman 2*'s launch in 1999, its creator Michel Ancel deeply wanted some change from the series that made him one of the most acclaimed game designers in the industry. He gathered a team in Montpellier, France, to start his new project. Jean-François Le Quéré joined this team in July 2000 as a level designer after passing a few tests and an interview with Michel. *Beyond Good & Evil* was his first professional experience in the industry. "Videogames schools didn't exist at the time, so the team was made of passionate people coming from diverse environments," he tells us. "Each of them could bring their own background and references to enrich the game, making it a very varied experience."

Thus, variety became *Beyond Good & Evil*'s main characteristic. Variety in terms of gameplay mechanics, considering that stealth and fighting phases alternate with hovercraft races and animal shooting sessions thanks to Jade's handy camera. There's also variety in terms of level design, with *Beyond Good & Evil* offering open-world features you can access with air or land vehicles, while memorable puzzle-solving moments are found in its dungeons. The latter provide a distinct *Legend Of Zelda* flavour, which is not surprising, considering, "Everyone in the studio was very fond of Shigeru Miyamoto's productions, starting with me," admits Jean-François. "Also, Jacques Exertier, who wrote *Beyond Good & Evil*'s story with Michel Ancel, loved to organise live treasure hunts with the team, sometimes lasting several days. You can find this mix of exploration, observation and puzzles to solve in the game."

> **"VISUALLY SPEAKING, BGE'S INFLUENCE IS 2,000% MIYAZAKI"**
> Florent Sacré

The *Beyond Good & Evil* development team also counts Hayao Miyazaki, cofounder of Studio Ghibli, among its other influences and inspirations. Florent Sacré joined the team at the beginning of 2001 as a 2D/3D graphic designer, when the team consisted of between 20 to 30 people. He mostly designed vehicles, settings and materials for the game, while Alexandra Ancel, Michel's wife, was handling character design. As the game's development evolved, Florent ended up taking on the role of lead artist. "Visually speaking, *Beyond Good & Evil*'s influence is 2,000% Miyazaki," he explains. "We were fascinated by what was considered exotic at the time. Hayao Miyazaki wasn't as popular in the West then as he is now. Many team members were also sensitive to the French and Belgian bande dessinée production and Disney's. But Miyazaki remains the biggest poetic inspiration." An iconic Japanese game also proved to be important to *Beyond Good & Evil*'s evolution, with Jean-François telling us, "*Ico* was also one of our influences. We loved Fumito Ueda's videogame and Michel and Jacques wanted *Beyond Good & Evil*'s players to feel the same strong relationship between that game's characters."

Being clearly considered as an invitation to dream and travel, Ubisoft Montpellier's game needed a music composer with very eclectic, international tastes. Christophe Héral was an ideal choice. "I am a composer who loves musical instruments," we're told. "Wherever I travel I can't help bringing

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL RETURNS

WHY THE NEW REMAKE IS A BEAUTIFUL CELEBRATION OF UBISOFT'S GAME

The most striking aspect of Ubisoft's recent remake is its cosmetic redesign. *Beyond Good & Evil* now offers a very sharp, crisp image. Textures, shaders and materials have been improved or added to make the game look truly gorgeous in places and it greatly outshines the work found in the 2011 HD remaster. While all the versions look very good, the Nintendo Switch version suffers from a capped 30fps and only offers a 1080p max resolution, which is far below what's offered on the other (admittedly more powerful) systems. In addition to a visual overhaul, a Speedrun mode has been added, for those who would like to finish the game without making a single save. For many though, this edition's icing on the cake is the excellent behind-the-scenes access it offers. There is a wealth of documentation provided about conception, pre-production and production phases, as well as sections about hidden secrets that were not implemented in the final version of the game. The music is suitably enhanced too, as this version's gorgeous soundtrack has been recorded again in a concert hall under the direction of Christophe Héral. Our only real niggles are that the game's erratic camera can sometimes cause problems and that the stealth and fighting elements haven't aged particularly well. It remains an essential pick-up for fans and you can read our full review in issue 202.

JANUARY 2001
3 / 9
Companionship is at the center of both story and gameplay. At this stage it's even planned for Sally to get 4 to 5 different sidekicks throughout her adventure...
Back
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» [GameCube] The *Matrix*-inspired rooftop chase is filled with plenty of cool pyrotechnic special effects.

» [GameCube] Jade wandering around the partly Italy-inspired city with her uncle Pey'j.

back an instrument with me. These can be quite large. In this case I just buy more airplane tickets. I joined the team in 1999. Michel Ancel was looking for someone who didn't come from the videogame industry, without particular knowledge about game mechanics. Someone who would come from documentary or linear narrative production. *Beyond Good & Evil* was meant to be a game for adults, dealing with topics like genetic manipulation to become immortal, which was what the DomZ were trying to achieve. But Jade herself uses a camera as a documentation tool, not a gun. I think there might have been some kind of link."

Thus, *Beyond Good & Evil*'s soundtrack became diverse, playing sounds and music coming from all over the world: Latino during a few hovercraft races, reggae whenever Jade pays a visit to Mammago Island, as well as Asian and Indian themes. "There isn't really any logic. Except for Mammago Island, obviously, populated by rhinos wearing Rasta hats. We had to record the echoing sounds created on a neighbour's anvil," explains Christophe. "We added music coming from an instrument found when travelling, some Indian instrument designed for tourists and sold at the airport! There are Arabic musical extracts when Jade wanders around the city. I am Mediterranean and I like Arabic and Andalusian music. On top of this extract I added my voice singing what I believe was Bulgarian or maybe Croatian words. I have no idea what these words meant but I found it interesting. I could say the same about the Hispanic track, where you can hear fictional Spanish words, just for fun. *Beyond Good & Evil* is multicultural," adds Christophe, "and gives a feeling you get when you walk around a city in the *Blade Runner* film, populated with people from a variety of different backgrounds."

Coming from the cinema industry, Christophe had a strong experience with sound effects. He even worked on the sound of an animated short film that won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes festival. "For the warehouse location in the game, we created a cinematographic atmosphere as much as we could. It was a way to differentiate *Beyond Good & Evil* from other productions at the time. Today, cinematographic methodology is the norm in the industry. For an anecdote, Medusas' noises were created out of squeezed dog food. I unfortunately dropped some on my trousers and had to wash them before they would get punctured. Our techniques came from cinema and animation because it was the sound culture I had."

While Christophe was tackling the game's eclectic soundtrack, Florent worked on designing the city. "Michel gave me guidelines to follow but I couldn't understand them so I went beyond these guidelines, keeping Michel's wishes and level design constraints in mind," he explains. "I then started creating a rush with a little bit of Italy, a little bit of everything I liked. It took a month to create." Despite the short timeframe, it wasn't straightforward. "There were many constraints on developing the city," continues Florent. "We wanted it to be epic and majestic but we could hardly use anything to do so; we only had tiny textures, for instance. It was extremely hard to create and we struggled to optimise it. I think moving around in the

» [GameCube] DomZ attack from the sky from Mammago Island's viewpoint.

"OUR TECHNIQUES CAME FROM CINEMA BECAUSE THAT WAS THE SOUND CULTURE I HAD"
CHRISTOPHE HÉRAL

» [GameCube] Jade needs to gather proof the local militia is actually not friendly.

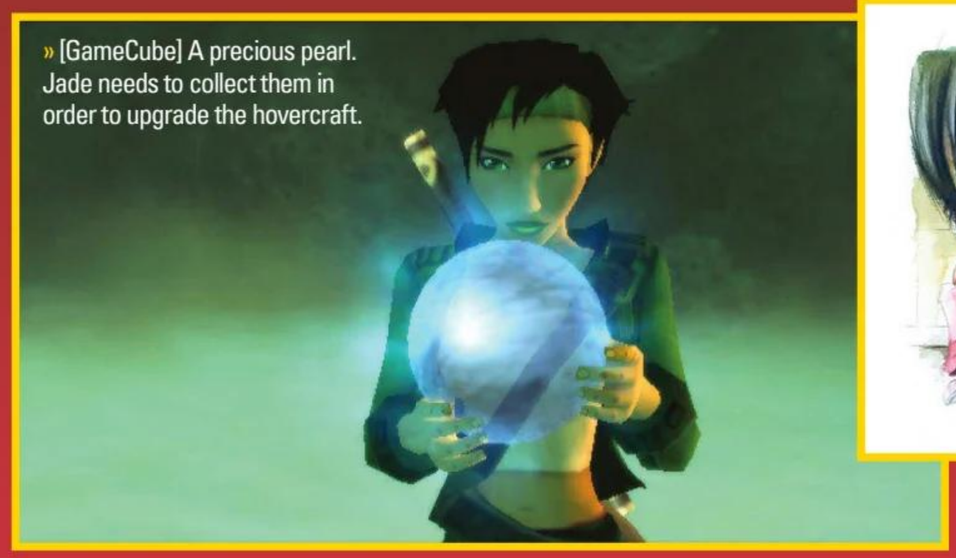
city required several loading times, because there were so many things to display on the screen. When you're on your PC and your work doesn't fit because there is new gameplay added or the main character has to cross another zone from the city, so you have to add another exit, another part of the city, initial constraints end up breaking. So everything has to be re-optimised, you need to get rid of some textures, rationalise what has already been done to find new ways or discard entire zones because it was too wide."

Beyond Good & Evil was powered by the Jade Engine, the development of which progressed as the game itself was being created. "Benefits and drawbacks of using such an engine were actually the same," explains Florent. "Engineers were always on the alert, especially those who were taking care of the tools. It was advantageous since every time we needed something, someone was here to listen to us to make the tools evolve exactly as we wanted. The small team was getting along very well, and we hardly needed to speak to understand each other, experiencing some kind of organic fluency. On the other hand, since the engine was evolving, we had to face many issues, that we had to compensate one way or the other. We didn't have any means to stand back from the engine, as no production had ever been made out of it."

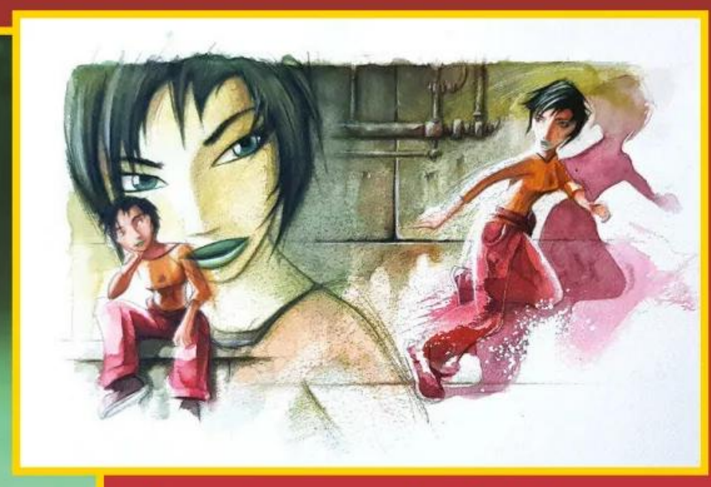
Jean-François had several tasks to perform, since there were only three level designers and a lead to develop the entire game. "We all worked on the dungeons but I particularly took care of Hillys, the hovercraft races, chases and some of the phases on the moon and on the satellite," he tells us. "We also prototyped a lot of stealth phases. Ubisoft Casablanca helped enrich the project by creating many chase and stealth phases. I am very proud of the rooftops chase: we wanted a very spectacular sequence, with many explosions everywhere, in Michael Bay's film style, for the game's advertisement, among other things. Here is a little secret I can share: this sequence is inspired by *The Matrix* and I invite anyone interested to compare this chase sequence with the beginning of the film."

For better or worse, *Beyond Good & Evil* wouldn't be *Beyond Good & Evil* without ▶

» [GameCube] Here's the Beluga flying over a Hayao Miyazaki-inspired island.



» [GameCube] A precious pearl. Jade needs to collect them in order to upgrade the hovercraft.



» Some early concept art of Jade. As fashion evolved, she ended up with greener clothes.

» Some early concept art of the main city, designed to be wide and majestic.

▶ its numerous scripted stealth sections. "We wanted the game to be accessible to everyone, but to be completely honest, I think that this was the first game developed by our team members offering this type of stealth [mechanic], so we prototyped a lot and adapted the situations to the game's humour and background," explains Jean-François. "These phases are actually designed as puzzles to solve. Maybe this is why they were so scripted."

If the stealth sections divided opinion, the same couldn't be said for the ambitious overworld which featured some impressive effects, particularly the final rendering of Hillys' ocean. "This was Philippe Vimont's job," Florent explains. "As an engineer on the project, he pushed the boundaries as far as possible. There was good communication with the art team, and we were lucky enough to have engineers in the team with a great artistic sensitivity. They had enough skill to perceive all the indicators to know what path to take to satisfy our constraints. *Peter Jackson's King Kong* videogame had actually been developed with the same team. The forest in [that] game was very impressive at the time as well."

For all the critical acclaim it would receive, Jean-François admits there were many hardships to overcome during development of *Beyond Good & Evil*. "My biggest challenge was creating Hillys at the right scale," he admits. "My first version was at the hovercraft's scale; I took into consideration its speed. One day, Michel asked to put Jade 'on' the hovercraft to check on the scale ratio and we realised Hillys was huge. I spent some time resizing Hillys to the right scale. We also had to stop developing entire parts of the game: the satellite, for instance, was supposed to be a full dungeon originally. Coming back from E3, Michel took the decision to modify the entire graphics part of *Beyond Good & Evil*, including the characters. Jade notably changed her appearance. He believed that [the game] didn't enter the graphical trend of the games to be released. This decision had been taken six months before launch, and it impacted all the work done on dungeons that had been created but not designed graphically. Thus, you can't find them in the released version of the game. The space exploration phase also had to be scaled down. Michel wanted to develop this aspect for *Beyond Good & Evil 2*."

"A VIDEOGAME NEEDS TO ENTER PEOPLE'S HEARTS, TO MOVE THEM"
FLORENT SACRÉ

A real-life flood also played a part in Ubisoft Montpellier's development as well. "The city was regularly flooded," says Florent. "We were working on the ground floor of an old house located in a depression. One night, at two o'clock in the morning, the water level started to rise and we had to rush to the office to put the computers on the desks in the best-case scenario, otherwise all PCs would have drowned under water. The day after we took a video of us swimming in the courtyard and inside the office!"

One aspect of Jade's adventure that feels particularly relevant today is the strong message of peace and anti-totalitarianism it conveys. Using her camera, she has to prove the collusion of the supposedly local defending militia with the DomZ, the bellicose aliens. The more successful her job as a reporter is, the more evidence she gathers, the more the population demonstrates against the corrupted authorities. "We've always tried to spotlight values in our games without moralising, because moralising is even more annoying when you go through a videogame,"

HEROES OF HILLYS

MEET BEYOND GOOD & EVIL'S CAST OF ENDEARING CHARACTERS

JADE

■ A strong, pacifist young woman, only armed with a daÏ-jo and a camera, whose secret origins are well hidden up to the game's ending. She is portrayed as a main character with a quick wit and a capacity for forthright repartee.

PEY'J

■ Although he's Jade's uncle, Pey'j also hides some secrets from her. He is a very talented pig-like humanoid mechanic who can easily create all sorts of gadgets, such as Jet-Boots. He is also in charge of the hovercraft's maintenance and upgrades.

SECUNDO

■ Forget about *Halo*'s Cortana, Secundo is the AI you need, capable of managing Jade's bank account or digitising any objects she can find in order to 'carry' them. He is an intangible hologram with a strong Hispanic accent using doubtful vocabulary.

» [GameCube] A day at the races. One of the many activities available in *Beyond Good & Evil*.

explains Florent. "But dealing with a subject in an open manner, in a way people can form their own opinions is a necessary thing. A videogame needs to enter people's hearts, to move them. I've applied this pattern to all the games I've worked on later."

Released initially as a short-term PlayStation 2 exclusive in November 2003, *Beyond Good & Evil* was well received by the critics – *games™* and *Game Informer* both gave it an 8, for instance. Sadly, this Ubisoft Montpellier production knew little commercial success, though. Florent cites one of the main reasons for its low sales was due to the launch of Ubisoft's *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* the exact same month. "Inside Ubisoft grew competition between the two projects," he explains. "When *Prince Of Persia* started to know a dazzling success, Ubisoft backed the game and focussed on it more than on *Beyond Good & Evil*, which was harder to sell. *Prince Of Persia* was easy to categorise, there was a brand behind it, when our project was new and a bit difficult to define." Despite this initial setback, strong word of mouth over the years and a couple of excellent HD updates means *Beyond Good & Evil* finally reached the wider audience it deserved. ★

WHERE'S BEYOND GOOD & EVIL 2?

WE CHART THE CHAOTIC GESTATION OF UBISOFT'S PREQUEL

■ Officially announced at Ubidays in Paris in 2017 after four years of development, *Beyond Good & Evil 2* is admittedly Ubisoft's largest and most ambitious project since the company was created. It's an ambitious AAAA game (Ubisoft's take, not ours) with a dedicated new in-house graphic engine offering co-op action and travel in a vast open world.

In terms of working conditions, this project was a big change for Ubisoft Montpellier, which used to work with teams of 30 to 40 people. According to Florent Sacré, who left the company, 400 people are working nowadays on this prequel to *Beyond Good & Evil*. "Development became too industrial and not organic enough because of the team's size, which didn't suit me at all", he tells us. In an investigation launched by the French daily newspaper *Libération* in 2020, 15 Ubisoft employees explained how toxic Michel Ancel's management became. He then left his job as a creative director and retired from the videogame industry. This was indeed a severe blow that has very likely impacted the prequel's development. Since then, the official webpage has not been updated, but Easter eggs have been placed here and there in the *20th Anniversary* edition, teasing about Jade's past, possibly indicating some news to come about this long-anticipated release.

DOUBLE H

■ This member of the IRIS Network has been taken prisoner. He turns out to be a very useful sidekick who can break grid doors and stun enemies once Jade rescues him. His life rules are dictated by his Carlson & Peeters manual that he often quotes.

HAL MAMMAGO

■ Hal lives on Mammago Island, whose residents are considered by Pey'j as crooks who sell hovercraft parts at very expensive prices. We find them, on the contrary, very likeable, as they are rhinos with dreadlocks constantly listening to reggae music.

MEÏ

■ This cat-like member of the IRIS Network is part of its medical team. She plays a crucial role getting Double H ready for action after he's rescued by Jade. In fact, her skills are so impressive that Double H soon joins Jade on her quest.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come

OLD!
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
retro GAMER
ESSENTIAL KONAMI ARCADE GAMES
THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA
echochrome
ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS
WE EXAMINE EVERY ASPECT OF KONAMI'S GHOULISH BLASTER
THE MAKING OF NARC
MASTER SYSTEM GEMS TO COLLECT
THE KEY TITLES TO BUILD AND EXPAND YOUR COLLECTION
ASTRO CITY MINI HANDS-ON

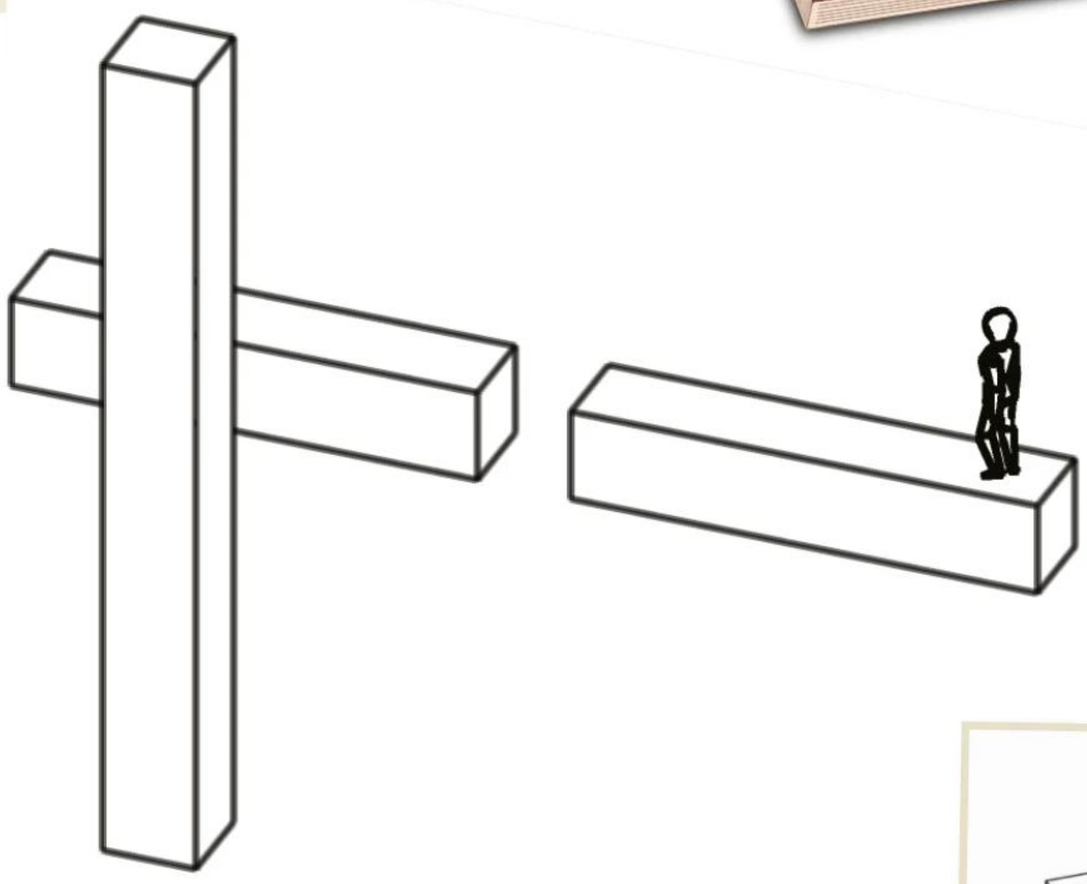
Info

- **System:** PSP, PS3, (PS4, PS5)
- **Year:** 2008 (2022)
- **Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment
- **Developer:** Game Yarouze / Japan Studio
- **Key People:** Jun Fujiki, Tatsuya Suzuki, Satoru Imamura, Kashin Hodotsuka, Hideki Sakamoto

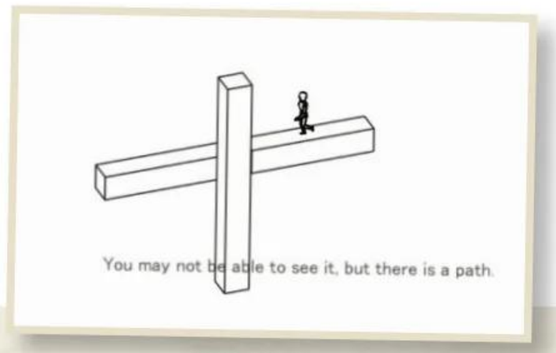
Go Deeper

» *Echochrome*'s composer Hideki Sakamoto considered naming the music tracks after philosophical terms, but later decided to use prime numbers to avoid colouring the perception of the listener.

» The most comprehensive versions to own are the PSP's physical UMD releases from Japan and Europe, which feature the greatest number of puzzles and game modes.



» [PSP] The Law Of Existence. Note the obstacle, a break in the horizontal walkway which your mannequin cannot cross.



» [PSP] Notice that the obstacle disappears when hidden behind the pillar, allowing your mannequin to cross freely.

Echochrome is one of the most distinctive puzzle games of all time, and a perfect example of the unique and beautiful small-scale games which so happily punctuated the prolific output of Sony's now-defunct Japan Studio

Words by James Tocchio

ECHOCHROME

THE BACKGROUND

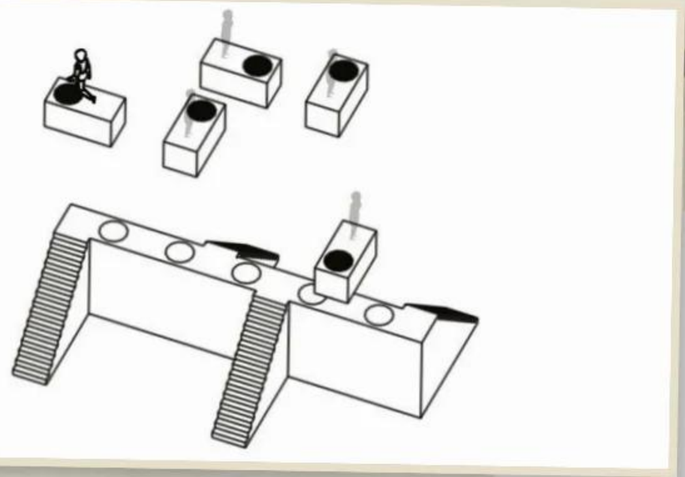
Beginning in 1995, Sony hosted an annual amateur game development program called Game Yarouze! through which participants could submit game designs to be judged by a panel of Sony reps and game journalists. Participants whose ideas were deemed to have potential received a contract with Sony, resources, and a team of developers to cultivate their concept into a complete and publishable game.

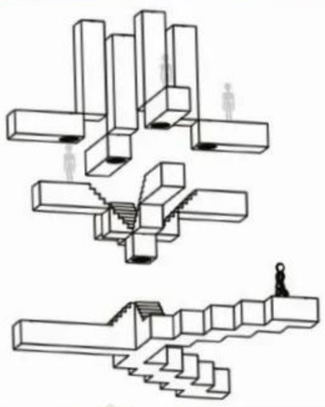
In 2007, Jun Fujiki created the Object Locative Environment (OLE) Coordinate System, a virtual environment engine in which movement constraints are not only defined by three-dimensional coordinates, but by the position of the camera as well. For example, if a character in a normal 3D space passes over a hole in the floor, they will fall through the hole. In the 3D space of the OLE engine, however, if you position the camera so that the hole is no longer visible, the character will ignore the hole as if it does not exist. This made it possible to create virtual optical illusions manipulable by the player, upon which a character may perform impossible movements. Development was handed to Sony's illustrious Japan Studio, which refined the concept into the inimitable *Echochrome*; a perspective-bending puzzle game with style and mechanics that are impressive to this day.

THE GAME

Echochrome's gameplay revolves around guiding an artist's mannequin through a series of three-dimensional platform mazes by shifting the perspective of the camera to seemingly alter the environment. The goal of each stage is to provide a pathway so that the autonomously walking mannequin may touch each Echo (shadows of itself placed at various positions along the 3D maze) and then return to the spot from which it began.

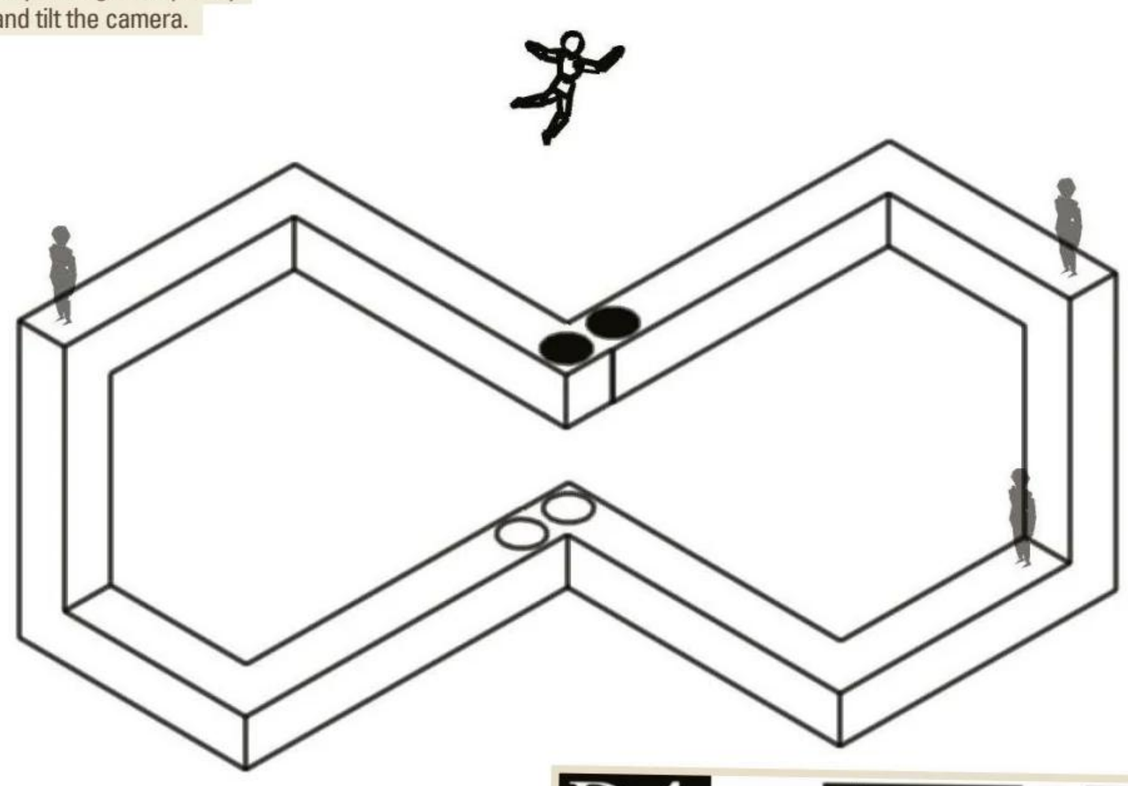
To accomplish this, you are taught five laws of perspective: Perspective Travelling states that disconnected pathways which appear to be connected from a certain camera angle may be traversed regardless of any obstacles that

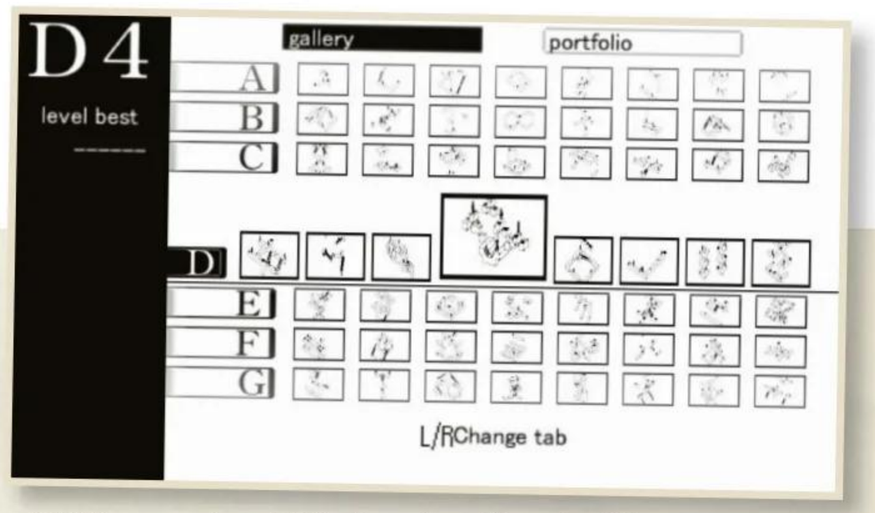




» [PSP] As one might expect, the puzzles get more complex and difficult as you progress.

» [PSP] Impossible objects, such as this strange geometry, change completely as you rotate and tilt the camera.





» [PSP] Some versions of *Echochrome* have 56 puzzles. Others, such as the Japanese physical UMD release, have 96.

might exist in the physical structure. Perspective Landing states that if the mannequin falls, it will land on any platform that appears to be directly beneath it from the player's perspective, even if the platform is not directly below it in real space. Perspective Existence and Perspective Absence are variations on the same rule, which states that obstacles that are hidden from the player's viewpoint cease to exist in the physical world. Perspective Jump states that the mannequin can jump to and land upon any platform that seems to be within range, provided the viewpoint allows.

The understanding and exploitation of these laws is critical to solving the game's perspective-based puzzles. By hiding jump pads and holes, by perspective-mashing two separated pathways, by positioning a beam to conceal a chasm, you're able to ease your mannequin through *Echochrome*'s many impossible landscapes.

It's inventive and unique, a meditative experience not encountered before nor since, and the satisfaction derived when the solution to an impossible problem almost magically coalesces out of the ether is hard to replicate. Simply put, no other game plays quite like *Echochrome*.

That said, it may be the game's aesthetic which is most striking and memorable. The minimalist styling is made of equal parts Jony Ive and MC Escher. Simple black wireframes in a universally white void epitomise the philosophy of design by subtraction. The musical score, composed by Hideki Sakamoto of the Tokyo-based sound design studio Noisycroak, is similarly concise, consisting of only a dozen songs performed by a string quartet of two violins, a viola, and a cello. The overall effect is one of deceptive simplicity and cerebral calm. As you play, you feel yourself getting smarter. Or at least, you feel yourself being lulled into a place of peace.

There's no time limit, though the player's best time is recorded for each puzzle and a cumulative time is recorded for each eight-puzzle course. There's no stress. The player is given everything needed to solve every problem, and then you're given time to experiment and explore. Whenever you make a mistake, the narrator says, "Oops". There's no reloading, no game over screen, the mannequin simply returns to its last known position, and you try something different.

An hour or two with *Echochrome* is a special experience. It's a warm cup of tea, or a nap at the beach. It's a rainy day with a favourite book, or the satisfaction of building something with your own two hands. It's meditation, mental yoga, a low-impact workout for the mind. It's also a perfect example of the type of game that made Japan Studio so unpredictable and special.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

The world is chaotic and messy, and it can sometimes feel as though you're being pressed from all angles by problems with no solutions. What if a videogame could help that? And what if that game was *Echochrome*?

Try it. Take a breath. Feel your heart rate slow. Feel your brain unfurl. Unclutter your mind and heart, and sit, and let a luxurious string quartet carry you into a clean and spacious world of elegance and perspective, to contemplate an abstract solution to a seemingly impossible problem. Solve the puzzle, or don't, and realise it doesn't matter, because at the end of an hour you've found peace through *Echochrome*.

Doesn't that sound nice? ✱

Things of note

A CREATIVE SUITE

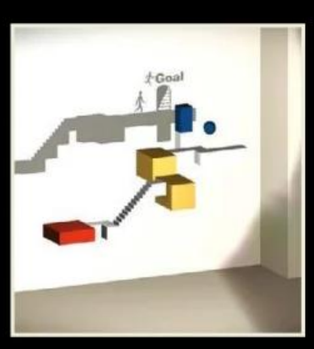
In Canvas mode, players could create, upload, and download their own and others' custom *Echochrome* puzzles. Developers eventually added 1,000 user-made puzzles to the PS3 version.

ECHOSHIFT, A SPIN-OFF

Echoshift is a 2009 puzzle game in which you guide your mannequin through platform puzzles using Time Bounces, small repeating time loops. It's also available on PS5.

ECHOCHROME'S INNOVATIVE SEQUEL

Echochrome II is a 2010 PS3 shadow and light puzzle game which used the PlayStation Move and PlayStation Eye as its method of control.



TAKE ME HOME

In the Bowling Alley location of *PlayStation Home*, there was an *Echochrome*-inspired arcade minigame, the completion of which rewarded players with *Echochrome* cosmetic collectibles.

WHERE TO PLAY

Echochrome is easily playable today via PlayStation Network, through which it can be bought and played on the PS5. We're still do love the PSP original though.

DAVID WISE

The acclaimed composer of classic videogame tunes reflects on his two decades at Rare, during which time he composed the soundtracks for dozens of hit games, including Wizards & Warriors, Solar Jetman, Battletoads and Donkey Kong Country

Words by Lewis Packwood

David Wise was selling keyboards in a music shop when Rare founders Chris and Tim Stamper happened to walk in. After he demoed his compositions, the brothers hired him to create the music for their debut NES title, *Slalom*. Over the next two decades, David would go on to compose music for dozens of classic Rare games, including *Wizards & Warriors*, *Battletoads* and *Donkey Kong Country*, before eventually leaving in 2009, several years after the company's takeover by Microsoft. Since then, he has composed music for games like *Tengami*, *Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze* and *Yooka-Laylee*, as well as the upcoming *Gimmick! 2*.

» David during his time creating game music for Rare. You can see a NES in the background.

How did you get into music, David?
We lived in a house in Leicester, and my brother was having piano lessons. I'd hear my brother playing stuff, and then I'd just wander across to the piano and start working stuff out myself. I found that I could listen to something and repeat it on the piano. Then writing music really happened a few years later when I got an acoustic guitar. I still don't know what I'm doing on an acoustic guitar, I just play it completely by ear. I only know a few chords, but I do play it enough to be able to compose bits of music on. Once I picked up that guitar and started jamming with it, that started the compositions off.

Did you start playing other instruments?
When I was about 13 or 14 I was playing trumpet and cornet in a brass band, and flugelhorn as well. Then I got myself a drum kit. I still have a drum kit. I'm not the best drummer, but there's something very organic about thrashing drums which I think all humans need to do. It's good for anger management!

Were you into games when you were growing up?
I think my first game was probably *Pong* on the Atari when I was three or something, and there were probably a couple more. But really it was *Super Mario Bros* on the Nintendo Entertainment System. When I started working for what was to become Rare (at the time, they were called Ultimate Play The Game) they just sat me in front of *Mario* on a CRT screen and said, get on and play this for a few weeks.

How did you end up working at Rare?
When I first met Tim and Chris [Stamper], I was working in a music store. I sold them some keyboards, and they hired me at the same time. They'd just managed to get *Slalom* working, which was their first game on the NES. So that's when I started working for them on a freelance basis.

Had you done any composition by that point?
Yes, I had. MIDI was a new thing, and because I was working in a music shop, it had given me the opportunity to use the modern gear, connect it altogether, and start writing stuff whilst I was working. So not only was I selling keyboards, I was also writing my own stuff.

And it was sheer chance that the Stamper brothers walked in?
I guess so. But that's life, isn't it?

What do you remember about working with the NES?
It was like a doorbell, really: there's three channels and a noise or drum channel. You've got a triangle wave – which in the high end, it sounds like an owl hooting, and in the low end, it sounds fuzzy because it was a very basic 8-bit system – and there were two square waves. So it was very limited, and it was quite hard to get a tune out of it. It took me several years of working pretty much every day to make it sound good. But it was a good education. If you can get an 8-bit system to sound decent, then everything else after that is a joy.

What was it like working at Rare in those early days?
It was more fun than working in the music shop. I had my own office, and I just went in ▶

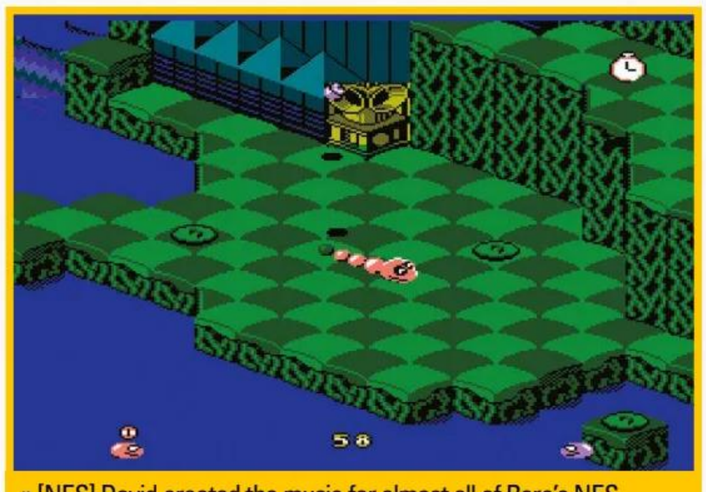
> If you can get an 8-bit system to sound decent, then everything else after that is a joy
>
> David Wise

» Here's David at Gamescom 2024, getting ready to discuss his involvement with the upcoming *Gimmick! 2* by Bitwave Games.

» [NES] *Slalom* was David's first Rare title. He was asked to write the music after a chance meeting with Rare founders Chris and Tim Stamper in the music shop in which he worked.

SELECTED TIMELINE

- **SLALOM** [1987] NES
- **WIZARDS & WARRIORS** [1987] NES
- **RC PRO-AM** [1988] NES
- **MARBLE MADNESS** [1989] NES
- **WWF WRESTLEMANIA** [1989] NES
- **CALIFORNIA GAMES** [1989] NES
- **WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT** [1989] NES
- **COBRA TRIANGLE** [1989] NES
- **IRONSWORD: WIZARDS & WARRIORS II** [1989] NES
- **SILENT SERVICE** [1989] NES
- **CAPTAIN SKYHAWK** [1990] NES
- **SNAKE RATTLE 'N' ROLL** [1990] NES
- **TIME LORD** [1990] NES
- **SOLAR JETMAN** [1990] NES
- **BATTLETOADS** [1991] NES
- **BEETLEJUICE** [1991] NES
- **WIZARDS & WARRIORS III** [1992] NES
- **RC PRO AM II** [1992] NES
- **BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON** [1993] NES
- **BATTLETOADS IN BATTLEMANIACS** [1993] SNES
- **BATTLETOADS ARCADE** [1994] ARCADE
- **DONKEY KONG COUNTRY** [1994] SNES
- **DONKEY KONG LAND** [1995] GB
- **DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2** [1995] SNES
- **DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 3** [1996] SNES
- **DIDDY KONG RACING** [1997] N64
- **MICKEY'S RACING ADVENTURE** [1999] GAME BOY COLOR
- **STAR FOX ADVENTURES** [2002] GAMECUBE
- **IT'S MR PANTS** [2004] GAME BOY ADVANCE
- **DIDDY KONG RACING DS** [2007] DS
- **VIVA PIÑATA: POCKET PARADISE** [2008] DS
- **TENGAMI** [2014] MOBILE/WII U
- **DONKEY KONG COUNTRY: TROPICAL FREEZE** [2014] WII U
- **SNAKE PASS** [2017] SWITCH/PS4/XBOX ONE/PC
- **YOOKA-LAYLEE** [2017] SWITCH/PS4/XBOX ONE/PC
- **YOOKA-LAYLEE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE LAIR** [2019] SWITCH/PS4/XBOX ONE/PC



» [NES] David created the music for almost all of Rare's NES games, such as the entertaining *Snake Rattle 'n' Roll* from 1990.

there and got on with it. It was fairly intense. If you compare it to games companies now, they're a bit more relaxed and they've got lots more employment law safeguards in place. However, I think because it was new and it was exciting and that's what we wanted to do anyway, we didn't realise how intense it was. But if it wasn't that intense, we'd never really have got the games out that we did.

What kind of intensity are we talking about?
Well, I'd get there at nine in the morning and leave at nine at night, and come back and do it seven days a week, that kind of intensity. And we all did that, whether you were graphics or programming. I think the only time we had off was Saturday mornings, when we'd probably clean our cars because there was a washer at the offices. There wasn't a lot else to do: we were in this farmhouse, and there were cows and sheep around, so the only thing that really entertained you was your actual work, which we loved doing anyway.

» [NES] *Wizards & Warriors* was the second NES game David worked on. He also composed music for the two sequels and the Game Boy spin-off.

Were you really into cars?
To be honest, no. But if you've got enough money to buy a decent car, you'd buy one, wouldn't you? I can remember having a nice sports car sat outside my house, and I cycled to work because I like cycling, so I hardly ever drove my sports car. In the end, I sold it and bought a grand piano. I've still got it in the room next door.

Were there any particular highlights for you out of the early games you worked on?
There was *Wizards & Warriors*, I really liked that. I was writing little ditties on the piano when I was at school, and I'd written the *Ironsword: Wizards & Warriors II* theme when I was 14 or 15. I was experimenting with counterpoint, which works remarkably well with a limited system, because you're suggesting chords without actually using them. And when you've only got three notes maximum, counterpoint is a great thing. The style of Bach translated quite well to videogames.

It must have been a revelation when you moved on to the 16-bit machines.
Oh, yeah, although we still didn't use MIDI. We had a program called Brief, and everything was typed in. You'd assemble, you'd wait, and you'd hear it. When the [SNES] came along, I imagined that I was going to be able to use a whole plethora of instruments, but there was only 64K of memory. If you put a CD on for 400 milliseconds, less than half a second, that's how much memory we had.

So how did you manage to produce such amazing music on the SNES?
There was a synth called the Korg Wavestation, and the way they did it was they got lots of little sounds and re-sequenced them. And I

thought, I could do that on a Super NES. I was experimenting with single cycle waveforms, which is where you take waveforms down to the smallest possible size. If you just play it in isolation, it sounds like a buzz, but if you put an envelope on it, suddenly it starts to sound more like an instrument. And then if you start taking lots of these single cycle waveforms and put them together rhythmically, or you're cross-fading between them, suddenly it sounds very musical. Your palette expands exponentially, and you can do many, many more things with it. So it was that excitement of thinking, "Oh wow, I've got all these new sounds to play with," that really drove the *Donkey Kong* soundtrack along.

> "I hardly ever drove my sports car. In the end, I sold it and bought a grand piano"
> David Wise

How did you get started with the *Donkey Kong Country* soundtrack?
I got started in France. I was sitting on a beach – I'd gone on holiday with Tim [Stamper] – and he was saying that we're going to do this 16-bit game based on *Donkey Kong* from the old 8-bit era, so I was quite excited about that. I always believed that someone like Kenji Kondo would come along and replace the music that I did. So when I was writing music for it, I just had this feeling that it was going to be replaced, which takes any pressure off. I wrote three pieces of music and handed them to Tim, and he said, "Can you put them all together?"

which I did – and that is the jungle theme for *Donkey Kong Country*. That's why it's in three distinct stages.

You've said before that Kenji Kondo was an inspiration for you.
Oh, completely. I mean, he'd done the *Mario* soundtrack, which when I first heard it, I couldn't work out whether it was not very good or genius. But the more you understand about music, the more you think, actually, that was inspired: that was a really clever use of a very limited sound set, being able to suggest chords and melody. It was a real education. So yeah, hugely inspirational, his work was amazing.

What other kinds of influences have you had down the years?
Not really videogames; I don't really listen to videogame soundtracks. I suppose it's things like playing in brass bands, orchestras, rock bands, covers bands, that kind of thing. I enjoy watching films, so film music. I wanted the score for *Donkey Kong Country* to sound like the big Japanese synths that were being used in film scores.

Were you frustrated that the SNES technology held you back from your ambitions?
Oh yeah, completely. You had to think about things differently. I learnt that if you're going to introduce a sound – even if it's only one sound – if it sounds really nice, and then you start taking channels away, nobody notices that you've taken all the detail away. They just hear the main thing, and their brain is filling in the details. That's a really good way of working that I still use now, especially for mixing.

» [NES] 1990's *Solar Jetman* features some of David's best work on the NES, with a brilliantly atmospheric and insistent soundtrack.

Did you have much interaction with Nintendo when you were doing the *Donkey Kong Country* games?
Miyamoto-san came over a couple of times. A few of them came over. Chris and Tim were the gateway, really, they dealt with Nintendo. So I had minimal interaction, really. My office at the time was quite big, it used to be a cow shed because it was on a farm, and it didn't have any windows apart from a skylight. So I spent most of my time in the cow shed doing stuff, and I had minimal interaction with people.

You were at Rare for around two decades, how did the company change over that time?
We worked on the N64, then we worked on GameCube, and at that point they were selling the company to Microsoft. Microsoft brought ▶

FIVE TO PLAY
You'd be wise to play the following games that David was involved with

WIZARDS & WARRIORS
■ *Wizards & Warriors* was Rare's second NES game after *Slalom*, and it was one of the first titles that David worked on. He has fond memories of the theme tune, which was based on a ditty he came up with on the piano when he was around 15 years old.

TIME LORD
■ David regards *Time Lord* as the pinnacle of his work on 8-bit systems. "I'd struggled to get to the quality of the Japanese composers," he says, but by 1990, he'd learnt new tricks. "It sounds more than an 8-bit machine. It's not just a tune, it's got a vibe."

BATTLETOADS ARCADE
■ David says he enjoyed working on *Battletoads Arcade*, and loved having 12 channels of sound to work with, which provided greater variety. "I could actually get some things that sounded like guitars in there," he says.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2
■ "For me, it was getting the most out of the sound chip on the Super NES," says David. "It went slightly further than *DKC1*, and the difference was we had a stack, so we weren't just limited to 64K of memory, we had a float which added an extra 10K."

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY: TROPICAL FREEZE
■ "It was like going home," says David of his work on this 2014 title. Kenji Yamamoto created the music for the previous game, *Donkey Kong Country Returns*, and *Tropical Freeze* was David's first chance to revisit the series.

NEVER LOOK BACK

Why David doesn't miss the old days

■ David firmly declares that he has no desire to go back to making music for early systems like the NES and SNES, since it was so incredibly difficult to conjure a tune out of these unforgiving machines. "It was really intense on the 8-bit system, it was even more intense on the 16-bit system," he says. "And because you're typing in numbers, it's all very mathematical, and you cannot afford to let the maths go. You've got to keep everything in line. So you're holding all this abstract channel data in your mind, because you'd be trying to get it efficient to save more memory. So you've got lots of subroutines spinning around for eight channels, and they've all got to add up, because if they don't, you could spend hours looking for the wrong number. It was very, very intense, there was a lot of plate spinning. It took a lot out of me even when I was 28, so to do it now, it would really hurt."

Does that mean David regards the NES/SNES period as the 'bad old days', then? "It wasn't bad," he says, "because we at least got something decent sounding at the end of it, it just took a lot of mental effort. But I think it was the same for the graphic guys and the programmers as well. We were always trying to exceed the limitations. Whatever discipline we were working in, we were trying to do better, because we were just very proud of what we did, all of us, and we just wanted it to be better."

It sounds like music was more about maths than creativity back then, we suggest. "But then music is maths anyway, isn't it, really?" counters David. "It's all very mathematical – and then it isn't. The structure has to be solid so you can fit something on that isn't. Because if you're writing a melody, it's got to be fluid. You don't want it to be static, it's got to have movement. And it's easy to suggest movement when you've got a solid backing: it flows a lot better."

> "I always believed that someone like Kenji Kondo would come along and replace the music that I did"
> David Wise

lots of good things to the company, but I really enjoyed working for Nintendo, and I missed that, so that's why, ultimately, I left.

Was there a particular thing that made you decide to leave Rare in 2009, or was it more of an accumulation of things?
Obviously there was an accumulation, but there was one particular event. We were working on the Kinect, and we were doing a bowling game, and it just took a lot more [jumping through] hoops to get anything done. It wasn't quick anymore. Not far from Rare, there was an empty, disused bowling alley, and I got permission from the owner to take my mikes down there and record all the sound effects. And it just never got signed off. I mean, I could have spent two days down there and got it done quite quickly. In the end, it was recorded over in Seattle with a big team of people doing the sound effects. And it was just that disconnection. You're thinking, "Well, I could have not only recorded it, I could have put all the sound effects in and sent them over in less time than it took you to record them."

That sounds frustrating.
It is frustrating. It was frustrating enough when you had the restrictions of the [old game consoles]. And then you finally get this system where you don't have restrictions, but you've inherited other restrictions. I think you find that with quite a lot of corporate companies. They have a process and a structure, and you have to follow that. And I kind of get why you'd do that, but I'd have done it differently, and I think many people probably would. So it was nice to leave Microsoft.

What was it like working on your first game away from Rare?
My first project was *Tengami* for a company called Nyamyam, and that was ex-Rare devs. Just that experience of working with people you're used to working with, who are just nice people, who love getting stuff done and want to be better than the competition, it was refreshing. Having worked in that [restrictive] environment before, [it was great to] find people who don't have those restrictions, so you can do something creative. Because ultimately, as developers, we're all creative, whether you do graphics, programming, or whatever. We're all creative types, we want things to be enjoyed by people, so any kind of barrier to that is not really welcome. Then after that, I went over to Austin in Texas to work for Retro Studios.

How was it working with Retro Studios?
It was very much like working at Rare, and some of the people I was working with had actually worked at Rare. So it was very welcoming. It was a very warm experience.

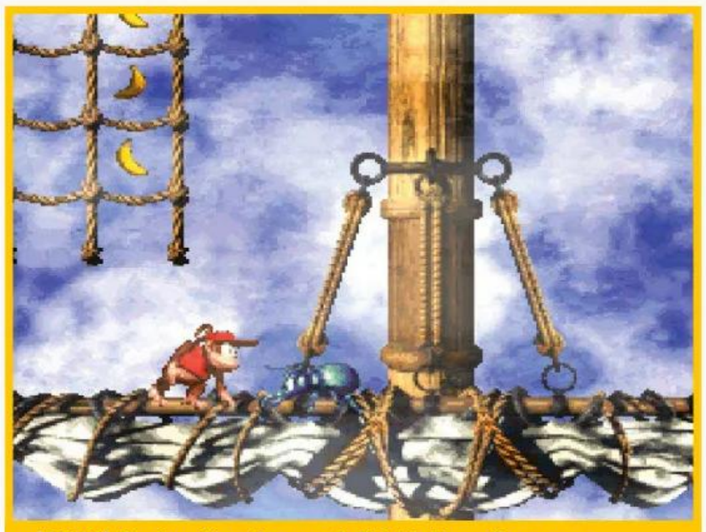
And you've worked on *Yooka-Laylee* as well, another title made by ex-Rare staff.
Absolutely. Another great bunch of people who are very passionate about the quality of work that they put out.

In a way, it's kind of like you never left Rare, since you're still working with the same folks…
Yeah, there is an element of that! And some of the other companies I work with have a very similar ethos, and they work in a very similar way. And most people who work within the industry have that [approach of], "We want to create something great, let's get our hands dirty and get involved." I like that approach. I suppose that goes back to the original Stamper family approach of keeping it intimate, keeping all of the other stuff outside separate from the people who are actually going to be creative.

» [NES] Although it reviewed poorly, with *Total!* awarding a score of just 43%, David regards the 1990 game *Time Lord* as a breakthrough in terms of his composition work on the NES.

» [NES] *Battletoads* was just one of several games David provided music for in 1991, with others including *Sneaky Snakes*, *Beetlejuice* and *WWF Superstars*.

» David meets up with Takaya Imamura at Gamescom 2024. Imamura has been involved in a large number of Nintendo games, including *F-Zero*, *Stunt Race FX* and *Lylat Wars*.



» [SNES] *Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest* was released in 1995, just a year after the first game, and David thinks it features some of his best work on the SNES.

» [SNES] *Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble!* saw players switching between Dixie Kong and Kiddy Kong on a quest to rescue Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong.

» [Wii U] *Tengami* was one of the first games that David worked on after leaving Rare. It was created by Nyamyam, a UK studio founded by Rare alumni Jennifer Schneidereit and Phil Tossell.

» [Switch] David was one of three composers for 2017's *Yooka-Laylee*, alongside Grant Kirkhope and Steven Burke.

» [Switch] David's most recent work is for *Gimmick! 2*, which incorporates numerous Swedish instruments in its compositions.

» [Switch] *Gimmick! 2* is looking like a lot of fun. Expect a review in a future issue of the magazine.

You've recently been working on *Gimmick! 2*, how did that come about?
Niklas [Istenes], who was running Bitwave, called me up and said, "I've always wanted to work with you." And I went over to meet them in Gothenburg and see what they were doing, and they were producing *Gimmick! 2*. Now, at the end of my NES development, I can remember Chris Stamper coming in, and he was showing me this game called *Gimmick!*. And I'm thinking, "Well, how did they manage to do that then? What have they got that I don't have?" And the cartridge had been enhanced with an extra sound chip, so they had three extra channels and some extra waveforms.

So you were familiar with *Gimmick!* from back in the day then?
I wasn't familiar. I can remember having an hour or two being shown *Gimmick!*, and the story behind it with the advanced sound chip. And [Rare] said, "You don't need to worry about that, Dave, because you're going to work on the Super NES, and that's got eight channels, and you can use samples." So I quickly forgot about *Gimmick!* at that point.

Are you trying to recreate the 8-bit chiptune style for *Gimmick! 2*?
No, not really. It's not somewhere I would want to go. People have offered me money to do it, and I've refused. Because the only way to do it properly would be to work on the hardware. We can emulate it, but without having those restrictions, it's just too easy to go, "Oh, well let's just put that in anyway," so it would never be an accurate emulation.

So what's been your aim for *Gimmick! 2*?
Joel [Bille], who's been doing the sound effects, he's also a very good composer in his own right, and he has a lot of friends over there who play Swedish instruments. And it was nice to be able to use the [musical] palette from Sweden. So we've got a nyckelharpa, which is like a violin, and zither-ish as well. It's this wonderful, hauntingly magical instrument that they play over in Sweden. And so to be able to work with that palette is great.

And what about the future? What's next for you?
Looking at the industry, there's been some readjustment with budgets and stuff like that because it was just getting too big. Too many people were trying to do the same thing slightly better, and it was killing innovation. I'm lucky enough to be working with some independent studios who are doing some very innovative products, and suddenly, game development has got exciting again. So although I can't disclose what I'm working on at the moment, there are some exciting games coming through with different ways of playing games. And that's really what the industry needed, because we don't need another third-person shooter with the latest rendering engine that's only slightly better than the one that's come before.

THE LATEST GIMMICK

How David crafted the soundtrack for Gimmick! 2

■ The Sunsoft platformer *Gimmick!* originally launched on the Famicom in Japan in 1992, followed by a limited release in Scandinavia in 1993. More recently, it was re-released on modern formats, allowing more gamers to experience the oddball (and now very expensive) adventure. Now, Swedish developer Bitwave Games is working on a brand-new sequel, and the studio has brought in David Wise to create the game's music.

David has been using Swedish instruments like the nyckelharpa for the soundtrack, recording the music live rather than using Virtual Studio Technology (VST) simulations. "I've got nyckelharpa VSTs, but they do not sound like a nyckelharpa," he says. "When it's set up and you've got somebody who can really play it, it sounds nothing like the VST. So [the VST] was a starting point for writing the tunes, but as soon as you add the real instruments, this wonderful sound comes as you put it all together."

He says he always tries to use live musicians whenever he can on soundtracks, since humans add their own inflections to the music that brings it alive. "They'll just put their own take on it. Slight things which I probably would have never imagined. If you've got somebody who plays the flute every day and can play it really well, they'll do things that you'd have never even thought of that enhance what you've done. So it's a real joy to work with real musicians."

David has created so many wonderfully energetic soundtracks for classic platform games in the past, so we're eager to see what he's come up with for *Gimmick! 2*. Bitwave's sequel is due out shortly and it's already looking like it's going to be a worthy follow-up to the quirky original.

ESSENTIAL GAME

INVIZIMALS: THE LOST TRIBES

There aren't many games that support the Go!Cam, but the *Invizimals* series accounts for three of them all on its own. The series tasks you with collecting and battling the titular Invizimals, with the unique twist being that they live undetected in our real world, and are revealed via the PSP. This is the third and most refined PSP entry in the series, which proved rather popular in Europe, particularly in Spain and Portugal – enough to spawn toys, stickers and a TV series.

Go!Cam

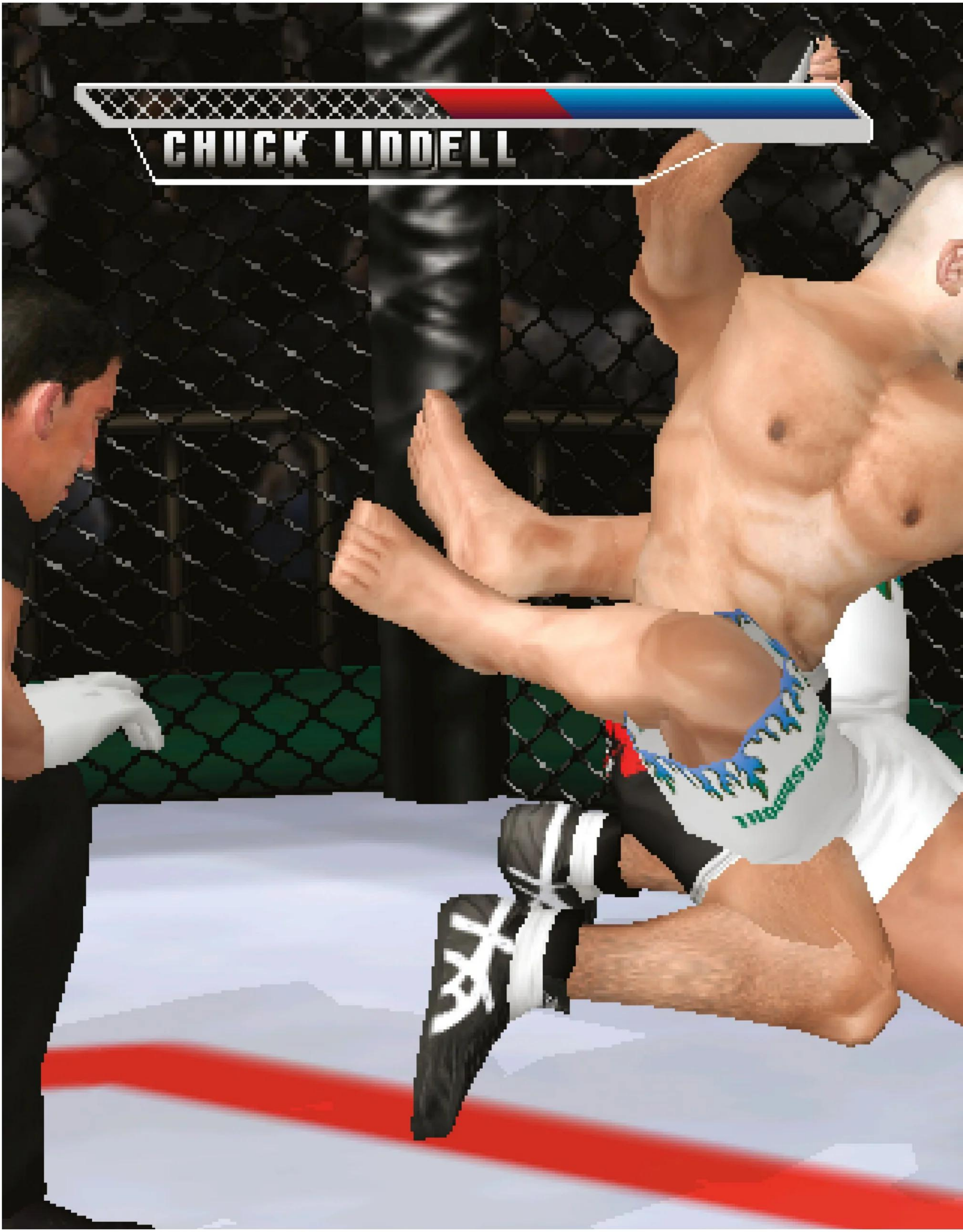
» **PLATFORM:** PSP » **YEAR:** 2006 » **COST:** £34.99 (launch, with game), £130+ (today, boxed), £30+ (today, unboxed)

The PSP offered a rather maximalist approach to non-gaming functionality – if you wanted a device in your pocket, from a video player to a translation tool, Sony wanted you to consider its handheld console as an option. With the rise of camera functionality in mobile phones, it's no surprise that the PSP became a camera in relatively short order, by way of this tiny silver attachment that plugs into the PSP's mini-USB port. This is found on top of all models of the console except, ironically, the PSP Go.

The Go!Cam is a 1.3 million megapixel camera that outputs images at a resolution of up to 1280x960, and can shoot video at 30fps at the PSP's native 480x272 resolution. The camera can be turned to face the front or rear of the console, as a novel and rather literal twist. The device was intended as a lifestyle accessory more than a gaming peripheral, but it became one later in the PSP's life, when augmented reality games such as the *EyePet* and *Invizimals* series required a camera for gameplay. *

Go!Cam fact

■ The camera shown here has the model number PSP-300. A later camera that was bundled with games, model number PSP-450, has similar functionality but has a lower resolution.


CHUCK LIDDELL

Ultimate Fighting Championship

A MAN WALKS INTO AN ARM BAR...

» DREAMCAST » 2000 » ANCHOR

Can you have too much of a good thing?

I love fighting games and the Dreamcast certainly has no shortage of great ones, but that became a problem when I binged on them and ended up craving something different from the standard fare. Unfortunately, it's not the strongest console for wrestling games, and that's how I ended up turning to *Ultimate Fighting Championship* – the very first licensed game based on the world's biggest mixed martial arts promotion, and my first exposure to the sport.

It's easy to forget now that UFC has a turnover of over $1 billion, but at the turn of the century the promotion was just emerging from the underground, after US politicians had campaigned to ban it. *Edge*'s 4/10 review said that "the real-life championship thrives on a vicious bloodlust" and described the game as being based on "shaky" moral ground. That reputation was all I had to go on and the game certainly delivered on the violence. As my friend James and I familiarised ourselves with the moves, we encountered some wince-inducing submission holds and saw blood splattered all over the mat thanks to some powerful punches.

However, the game offered much more than the sight of mountainous, meaty men – highly detailed ones, for the time – flattening faces on foot. Takedown techniques are a key part of MMA, so fighters have to be proficient in fighting from their backs and regaining positional advantage once the fight has gone to the ground, and simulating that aspect of the sport allowed the game's approach to man-on-man combat to feel refreshing. James and I were soon engrossed in applying arm bars and thwarting heel hooks, and we only stopped to go online and seek out clips of fighters like Tito Ortiz, Chuck Liddell and my personal favourite, Dutch kickboxer Bas Rutten. We'd never have done that without this game, so it performed one heck of a reputational rehab. *

» This month we play a bunch of excellent Castlevania games, examine the first Giga Cart releases for the Evercade, check out Tengo Project's remake of a beloved NES classic and revisit Doom and Doom 2

» [PC] *Haunted Castle Rebirth* is worth the price of admission alone.

retro GAMER SWITCH

Castlevania Dominus Collection

A COMPILATION WITH PLENTY OF BITE

INFORMATION

- **FORMAT REVIEWED:** PC
- **ALSO ON:** PS4, XBOX ONE, SWITCH
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £19.99
- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** M2
- **PLAYERS:** 1

M2's latest collection is arguably one of its best yet. While it doesn't embrace the historical side of its chosen series like Digital Eclipse does, it offers faultless emulation and excellent quality-of-life extras that never fail to impress.

Its latest collection not only features three of the best *Castlevania* Metroidvanias of all time, but also reinvents what many consider to be the worst game in the series – *Haunted Castle*. Originally released in arcades in 1988, it's a notoriously bad platformer that M2 has emulated in all its janky glory. The talented developer has also created a brand-new remake called *Haunted Castle Revisited*, which is a spectacular reinvention that fixes all the problems of the original adventure and modernises it with solid mechanics and gorgeous pixel art.

It's a genuinely excellent game that we'd be more than happy to pay the cost of this compilation for. It really is that good. Granted, it's perhaps a little easy now, but movement feels excellent, the bosses are satisfying to tackle and often spectacular to look at, while the new soundtrack is marvellous (you can never have too many renditions of *Bloody Tears* in our opinion).

Equally marvellous is the way M2 has handled the adaptations of *Dawn Of Sorrow*, *Portrait Of Ruin* and *Order Of Ecclesia*. All three games originally used the DS' touch-screen, and M2 has handled this on PC by letting you use the mouse, your controller's second analogue stick or a touch-screen (should your PC support

» [PC] The DS games are full of amazing bosses and now you can fully appreciate them in all their pixel-art glory.

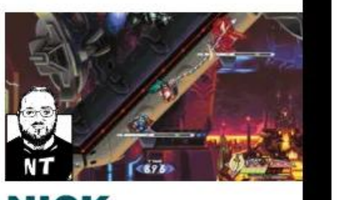
» [PC] It's a terrible use of your screen's real estate, but an authentic DS layout is included if you need it.

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

Evercade: Legacy Of Kain Collection

This has been a lovely surprise and both games still hold up extremely well, particularly *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain*.



NICK

Shadow Of The Ninja Reborn

I've learned to look forward to Tengo Project's games, and it's easy to see why – how many developers are this good at pixel art now?

BRIEF HISTORY

» The *Castlevania* series began in 1986 and went on to spawn numerous sequels. After proving his programming mettle with *Symphony Of The Night*, Koji Igarashi became the custodian of the series for many years. The three DS games featured here are considered some of his best work and are essential for both fans of the series and those who enjoy Metroidvanias.

» [PC] The Compendium is a nice addition and is filled with all sorts of useful statistics.

MUSIC MAESTRO

▼ M2'S MUSIC MUSEUM IS FILLED WITH CLASSIC TUNES

Castlevania is a series that's renowned for having atmospheric tunes and this new compilation has some real belters. The new remix of *Bloody Tears* from *Haunted Castle Revisited* is monstrously good, while *Dawn Of Sorrow* is filled with fantastic tunes, from *Demon Guest House* to a great remix of *Vampire Killer*. There are 163 tracks spread across all five games, meaning it's a pretty comprehensive selection. *Portrait Of Ruin* is our favourite overall, thanks to an excellent version of *Theme Of Simon Belmont*. You might not get a lot of behind-the-scenes extras, but at least the music is mind-bogglingly comprehensive.

it). Additionally, *Dawn Of Sorrow*'s annoying boss seals can now take the form of QuickTime Events, although they can be frustrating to pull off as they become more complicated. It's a pity no option was included to auto-complete them, but it's not a huge problem.

Screen estate is also carefully considered, and several layouts are included, meaning you can see the main playing area and the map and stat screens side by side without having to switch between them (although that option is offered if you want to use it). There are no filter options like on M2's earlier *Castlevania* collections, but if we're honest everything looks lovely and sharp so their absence isn't really missed.

» [PC] You can switch between characters in *Portrait Of Ruin* – all the better for destroying bosses.

» [PC] The compilation's presentation is tremendous. It's even possible to choose regional variants of each main game.

In terms of quality-of-life extras, *Dominus* includes all the usual options from M2, meaning there are save and load options and an excellent rewind mechanic that lets you travel back frame by frame to a safer point. The controls for each game are fully customisable as well. As with the earlier *Castlevania Advance Collection* there's a handy Compendium which displays incredibly useful information about each game, from how each Tactical Soul or Glyph works, to what drops you'll receive from monsters. It's nothing groundbreaking, but it's all done with M2's usual attention to detail and arguably helps make this compilation the definitive way to enjoy the included games.

And let's be honest, there's some peak *Castlevania* in this collection. All three DS games are great, even if *Dawn Of Sorrow* is hampered somewhat by those aforementioned seals. They're all distinctly different to each other as well, which adds further to the collection's appeal. *Harmony Of Dissonance* is a sequel to *Aria Of Sorrow* that expands on that game's excellent Tactical Souls system, *Portrait Of Ruin* introduces a secondary, switchable character that you can use to solve puzzles and take down bosses, while *Ecclesia* dramatically expands the RPG elements of the earlier two games and also adds an excellent Glyph system.

All three DS games look remarkable as well, with the pixel art really coming to the fore thanks to the larger display. Granted, there's a lot of reused sprites throughout the three titles, but there's no denying the overall quality and it really allows you to appreciate the work of Konami's original animators and graphic artists.

Castlevania Dominus Collection is let down a little on the curation side, but that's largely because we've been spoiled by Digital Eclipse's Gold Master series. There's a staggering amount of art available for each game, along with instruction manuals and full music soundtracks as well. Behind-the-scenes material would have been nice, but this still manages to feel rather comprehensive.

Konami seems intent on making all its classic *Castlevania* games available for modern systems. Based on the quality of M2's last three compilations about the series, we hope the 3D games end up receiving the same loving attention. We'll certainly buy them. ✱

In a nutshell

This is another masterful collection from M2 and is arguably the best way to enjoy these classic DS games today. The inclusion of *Haunted Castle Revisited* is the icing on a particularly delicious cake.

» Score **93%**

» [PC] There's a tremendous amount of artwork in M2's compilation, and most of it is stunning.

» [PC] Each game features a genuinely useful rewind option so you can work out precisely where you went wrong.

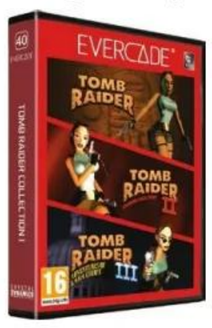
★ PICK OF THE MONTH

Evercade Multi Game Cartridges

» **System:** Evercade family » **Buy it for:** £22.49 each » **Buy it from:** Online, retail

Blaze Entertainment's Giga Carts have certainly caught the attention of the Evercade community. *Tomb Raider Collection 1* is the biggest hitter and includes the first three PlayStation games. They're very well emulated, feature customisable controls and you can also use Evercade's Challenge Mode option for an added test of skill.

While we can't fault the ambition of the three included games, it's fair to say only the original truly holds up as an outright classic. Their impact on Evercade has also been lessened by the trilogy being readily available on other contemporary systems (in enhanced forms no less) for some time now. That's not to say they're still not good games, but this Evercade cartridge isn't really the optimal way to enjoy them today.



» Score **71%**

Luckily, Blaze's second Giga Cart is much better, and includes *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain* and *Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver*. Both titles play well, with *Soul Reaver* actually feeling more polished than Core's *Tomb Raider* games. They feature the same in-game options as the *Tomb Raider* cart and run very well with rock-solid emulation. Crucially, both offer distinctly different experiences, which give them another edge over the *Tomb Raider* trilogy. It's a shame there's no options to lighten up *Blood Omen* (it's very dark in places) but it's our only real issue with the collection.

While both carts suffer from lengthy loads when you first start them up, they're fairly priced and come with the usual colour instruction manuals. If we had to choose just one we'd take *The Legacy Of Kain Collection*, but both should please their respective fans.

» Score **86%**

» [Evercade] Although *Blood Omen* is currently available on PC via GOG, *Soul Reaver* (above) is an Evercade exclusive.

» [Evercade] One neat aspect of revisiting the *Tomb Raider* trilogy is that you can see how the series evolved. We were surprised at how rough *Tomb Raider 2* (above) looked, mind.

Doom + Doom II

» **System:** Xbox Series S/X (tested), PS4, PS5, PC, Switch » **Buy it for:** £7.99+ » **Buy it from:** Online

Stunning is the best way to sum up this new collaboration between Nightdive Studios, id Software and MachineGames. In addition to the base games, you'll also receive *SIGIL*, *TNT Evilution*, the excellent new episode *Legacy Of Rust*, Master Levels for *Doom II*, *No Rest For The Living*, *The Plutonia Experiment* and 29 new Deathmatch maps. Add in enhanced visuals, the ability to download additional mods (hand-picked on Switch, sadly), improved controls and numerous other extras and this is arguably the best way to enjoy these classic games. It's very hard to see how this collection is going to be topped in the near future, as it represents exceptional value for money.

DARRAN JONES

» Score **96%**

Shadow Of The Ninja Reborn

» **System:** Switch (tested), PS4, PS5, Xbox Series X/S, PC » **Buy it for:** £17.99+ » **Buy it from:** Online, retail

You'd never imagine this game was based on a 1990 NES game from a quick glance, but Tengo Project has taken it as the inspiration for a highly enjoyable action platformer that offers smooth, modern controls and a real retro challenge. Playing as Hayate or Kaede (or both, in co-op), you must use your katana, grappling hook and an array of secondary weapons to battle through six stages, all of which are expertly designed to reward patience and practice. The pixel art here is of a truly exceptional standard and the music fits well. Switching between sub-weapons is a bit fiddly, but that's a minor gripe in a fantastic game.

NICK THORPE

» Score **90%**

Parking Garage Rally Circuit

» **System:** PC » **Buy it for:** £8.50 » **Buy it from:** Online

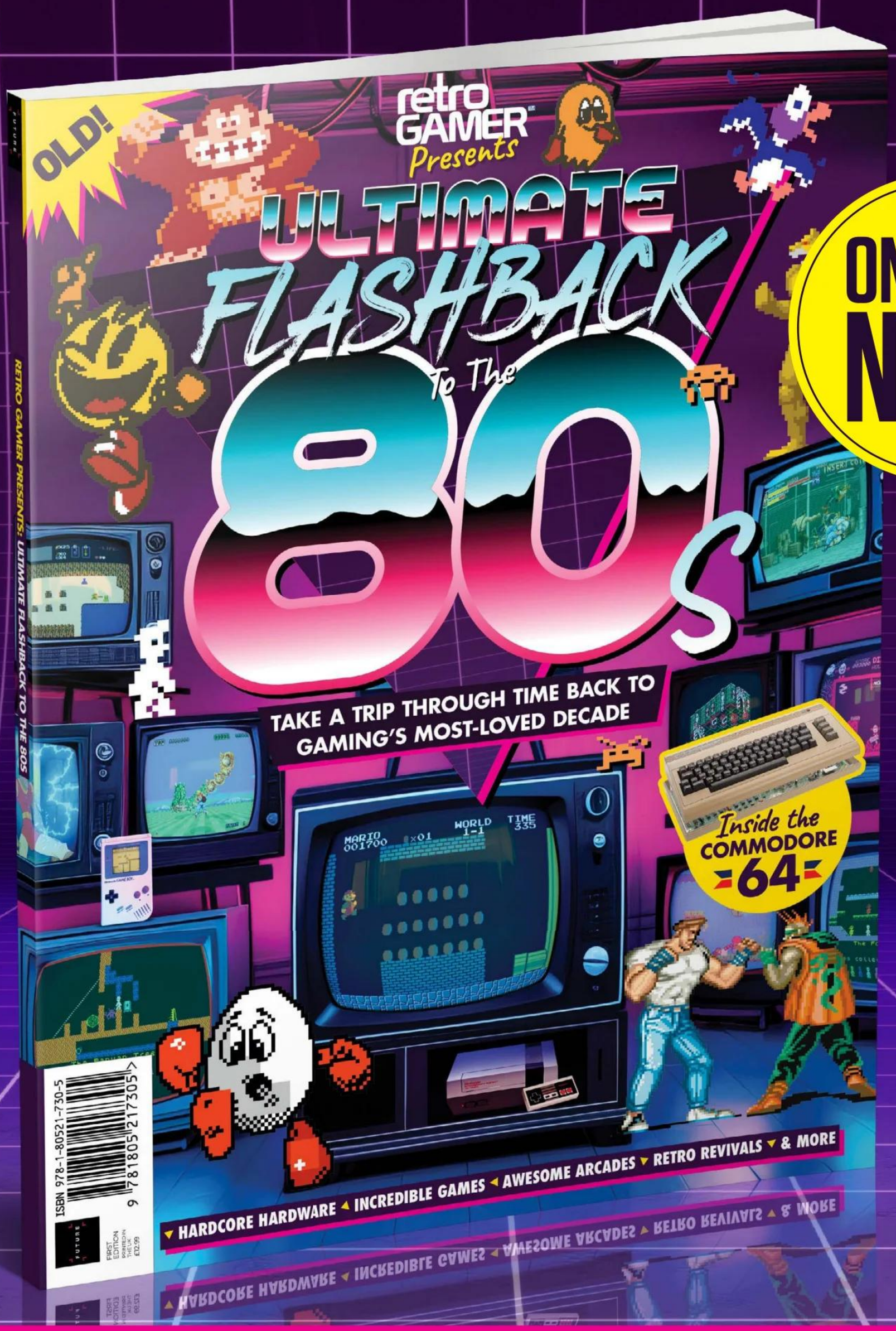
The concept of racing around car parks probably conjures up an image of compact circuits and tight corners, and this arcade racer's drifting mechanics are certainly tuned for such conditions. Although its title suggests it might not sound like it offers a lot of variety, mid-race incidents including rock slides and lightning strikes keep its eight tracks interesting. The Saturn-inspired visuals are neat, but the jaunty ska soundtrack is the real highlight. It's a bit too easy to flip your car over and the tight circuits can make it hard to anticipate upcoming turns, but this is a fun little slice of time-attack racing.

NICK THORPE

» Score **80%**

GET READY TO HEAD ON A NOSTALGIC TRIP TO THE WORLD OF EIGHTIES VIDEOGAMING!

Prepare to head back to a time when pixels ruled the screens. Explore the games, machines, icons and much more that made this memorable decade so special in this time-bending bookazine from the makers of Retro Gamer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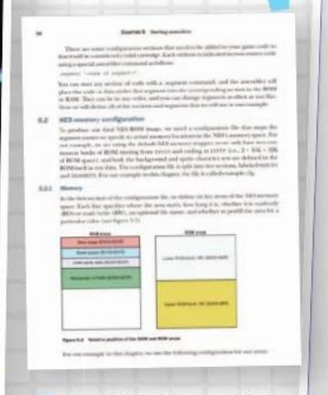
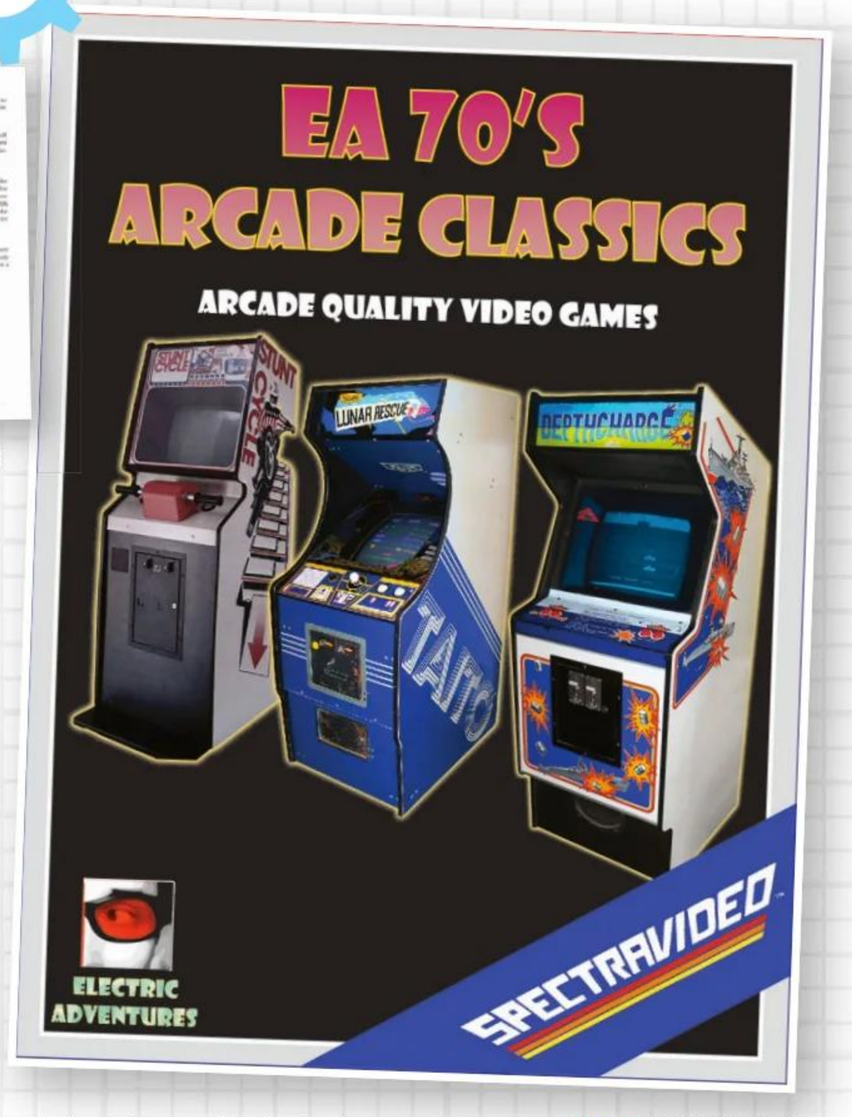
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>

<!--- [MSX] ASTEROID RESCUE IS BEING MADE WITH JIM'S BITE SIZE GAMES. --->



<!--- CLASSIC GAME PROGRAMMING FOR THE NES INCLUDES HANDY INFORMATION SUCH AS THIS USEFUL MEMORY MAP. --->



<!--- BOX FOR 70S ARCADE CLASSICS WITH SPECTRAVIDEO BANNER. --->

<INTRO> GETTING YOUR HOMEBREW GAME ONTO A CARTRIDGE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THESE DAYS. OUR MAIN FEATURE TALKS TO AN AUSTRALIAN PROGRAMMER WHO IS MAKING HIS OWN, AND OUR CHAMPION CODER WOULD LOVE TO SEE HIS GAMES PHYSICALLY RELEASED. THE GAME PREVIEWED IN PROCESSING COULD ALSO APPEAR IN CARTRIDGE FORM FOR MULTIPLE HANDHELD AND CONSOLE FORMATS. ALL OUR REVIEW TITLES WILL BE APPEARING PHYSICALLY, BUT YOU CAN ALSO GRAB A DIGITAL DOWNLOAD TO ENJOY THEM. </INTRO>

<MAIN HEADER>

ELECTRIC ENTERTAINMENT

<INTRO> VETERAN AUSTRALIAN PROGRAMMER TONY CRUISE OF ELECTRIC ADVENTURES IS CREATING NEW CARTRIDGES FOR THE SPECTRAVIDEO, COLECOVISION, AND MSX </INTRO>

<BODY> **Tony Cruise has always loved coding.** "I lived down here in Tasmania, and I started at high school with computers, which was a dumb terminal into the Elizabeth Computing Center [mainframe]," he tells us. "By the end of grade 10, I handed in a paper on how to program in BASIC."

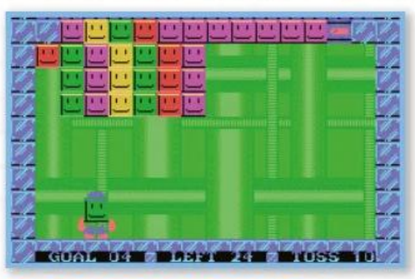
After college, Tony worked at a local store called Let's Play Games. "The guy running this local store had the agency for Spectravideo computers for Australia," he explains. "I wrote some games released in the user group magazines. Then I decided to release *Program Packs* with between two and four games on them. The second tape had *Hopper*; you can guess what *Hopper* was based on. My biggest-selling game was *Pyxidis* [a vertically scrolling shmup]. I sold enough copies in Australia and New Zealand to buy myself a car." Tony then went into magazines, editing and writing *Micro Gazette*.

The Coleco adapter for his Spectravideo got Tony back into programming, after publishing a user guide for the Spectravideo and MSX machines. "I took my three first machine code titles – *Meteor Swarm*, *Birds Of Orion* and *Munch Mania*, and whacked on a menu. And that was my first cartridge in-box release for the Coleco through CollectorVision. That was just fantastic to me." *Cavern Fighter* – based on *Scramble* – and a semi-official Coleco conversion of *Berzerk* with speech followed. Tony's book *Programming Games For The ColecoVision And Adam* became available on Amazon, inspired by his YouTube series Let's Program A Retro Game.

Creating a *Nintendo World Championships*-style cartridge with three timed subgames for the Game On Expo got him into NES programming. This led to his latest book, *Classic Game Programming* for the NES – with a foreword by the Oliver Twins. "That takes people right from the beginning, teaches you 6502 as much as necessary, and then introduces

<!--- TONY CRUISE OF ELECTRIC ADVENTURES SHARES HIS NEWEST BOOK. --->

ADVENTUROUS ANTICIPAT



BLOCK 'EM SOCK 'EM

Master System, Spectravideo, MSX, ColecoVision (pictured)

<"I've always wanted to make a Master System game. I'm going to enhance John Hancock's original game." />

PYXIDIS EX

Spectravideo, MSX (pictured), ColecoVision

<"I've improved the scrolling. I've added a challenge stage, different bosses and my sprite anti-flicker routine." />

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**

<!--- [NES] TONY IS CONVERTING COLLECTORVISION'S SYDNEY HUNTER & THE CAVERNS OF DEATH FROM SNES TO NES. --->

one concept at a time. Step by step, they get a little minigame at the end and then hopefully they know how to make their own games after that," we're told.

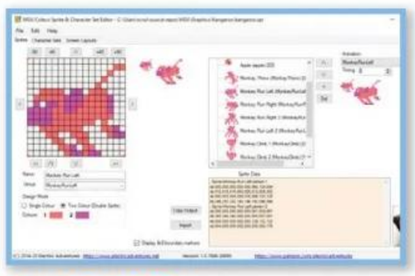
Tony recently published a new cartridge for MSX, ColecoVision, and Spectravideo – *70s Arcade Classics*. "I started with *Lunar Rescue*, one of my favourites. Back in the day, I wrote a version in BASIC; I rewrote that from scratch and enhanced the graphics. *Depth Charge*, I rewrote that in machine code. I thought, I'll find another game from the Seventies, a simple one to add would be *Stunt Cycle*. It was harder than I thought to get the jump physics." The first new Spectravideo cartridge in nearly 40 years has been selling well, with Tony making everything himself. "I quite enjoy the actual assembling of the cartridges. And I am 3D printing the shells." With multiple projects underway (see Adventurous Anticipation), visit electricadventures.net to buy games and follow Tony's progress. </BODY>

<!--- THE 70'S ARCADE CLASSICS CARTRIDGE MADE BY TONY FOR SPECTRAVIDEO. --->

<!--- [PC] TONY'S MSX/COLECO SPRITE AND TILE SET EDITOR IS USED BY MSX DEVELOPERS. --->

ION

<INTRO> THE KEY PROJECTS TONY IS WORKING ON </INTRO>



KANGAROO

Spectravideo, MSX, ColecoVision

"I've never actually written a platform game; I have to see how I go with the rights," says Tony. Shown here are sprites being edited. />

SPACE DUNGEON

Spectravideo, MSX (pictured), ColecoVision

"I also like twin-stick shooters. I haven't worked out the control scheme yet, but I'll include a few options." />

SEAQUEST

TI-99X (pictured), Spectravideo, MSX, ColecoVision

"One of my favourite 2600 titles that didn't come out for anything else. I once held the world record of 229,000." />

<!--- [COLECOVISION] OSCAR PREVIOUSLY CONVERTED DOS CLASSIC GORILLA.BAS TO THE INTELLIVISION, NOW IT'S ON COLECO. --->

NEWSBYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

Amiga: The latest release from Amiten Games is *Holy Warrior*, with the digital download costing €2.95. Find it at bit.ly/holywarrior-amiga />

Amstrad CPC: Dave Moore converted early Spectrum classic *Transversion*, adding gameplay updates from sequels *Sector* and *Sector: Invasion*. It's available to play by visiting bit.ly/transversion-cpc />

Atari STE: Puzzle game *Chroma Grid* from TOYS won the Wild competition at the Sommarhack 2024 demoparty in Sweden and comes with a level editor. Give it a try by heading to bit.ly/chromagrid />

Atari XL/XE: Check out the excellent conversion of *Mikie* (top) by Krzysztof Gora, Michal Szpilowski and Krzysztof Ziembik. Return to school and visit bit.ly/mikie-atarixl />

ColecoVision: Oscar Toledo Gutierrez, creator of CVBasic, has converted *GORILLA.BAS* to the console. Fancy going ape? Then grab it from bit.ly/gorilla-coleco />

Game Boy Color: Fans of Nintendo's *F-Zero* should check out *G-Zero World GP* by User0x7f immediately. Take it for a spin at bit.ly/gzero-gb />

PICO-8: Shmup fans should check out the bullet hell game *Ghost Wave* by monoRAIL, which you can play in a browser. You'll find it at bit.ly/ghostwave-pico8 />

SNES: *Goomba Breakout* by BriG78cx has a free demo with 5 levels, or you can pay $5 for the full game with 20 levels of Goomba-bashing action. If you like the sound of it, you can download it from bit.ly/goomba-breakout />

Various: The latest multiformat game from Inufuto is platformer *Osotos*. There's more information at bit.ly/osotos-inufuto />

VIC-20: You're going to dig (for treasure in) Misfit's latest game *Panty Man* for the unexpanded VIC. Grab yourself a spade and head over to bit.ly/pantyman-vic20 />

ZX Spectrum: Yandex has opened the 4th Yandex RGB competition for Spectrum programmers. Judges include Ocean's Simon Butler and Mark R Jones, with the deadline on the 28 July 2025. Enter at en.yrgb.ru />

CHAMPION CODER

SHANE MCCAFFERTY

<INTRO> FORMER IPHONE DEVELOPER SHANE TALKS ABOUT CREATING THE RACING GAME HOONIGANS, PUBLISHED THROUGH THALAMUS DIGITAL </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: IRISHMAN LIVING IN ONTARIO, CANADA WEBSITE: @EGVROOM ON X/TWITTER, THALAMUSDIGITAL.ITCH.IO/HOONIGANS FORMAT: GAME BOY PREVIOUS GAMES: STARSEED (IPHONE, GAME BOY), WORD FORWARD (PC, MOBILE, SWITCH), LOVE (PC, MOBILE, SWITCH), BLOCK DROPPIN' (GAME BOY) WORKING ON: HOONIGANS (GAME BOY COLOR) />

WHAT GOT YOU INTO GAME BOY PROGRAMMING?

<About two years ago, I got burnout – not the good kind, Criterion *Burnout*. I couldn't do anything creative. My partner who runs the company [Rocketship Park] bought me an Analogue Pocket. And he kind of knew that I would get to it eventually. I started to make tiny little Game Boy games. And that kind of made me better. />

<!--- SHANE AND HIS CANINE COMPANION BANDIT. --->

WHAT'S YOUR DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT LIKE?

<GB Studio – an absolutely fantastic piece of software. It never gets in your way. You can eject the engine if you want. And the community is great, everybody is very helpful. The only other tool is Visual Studio Code to edit any C files. I do my art in Pixelmator on a Mac. />

WERE YOU HAPPY WITH HOW THE STARSEED GAMES TURNED OUT?

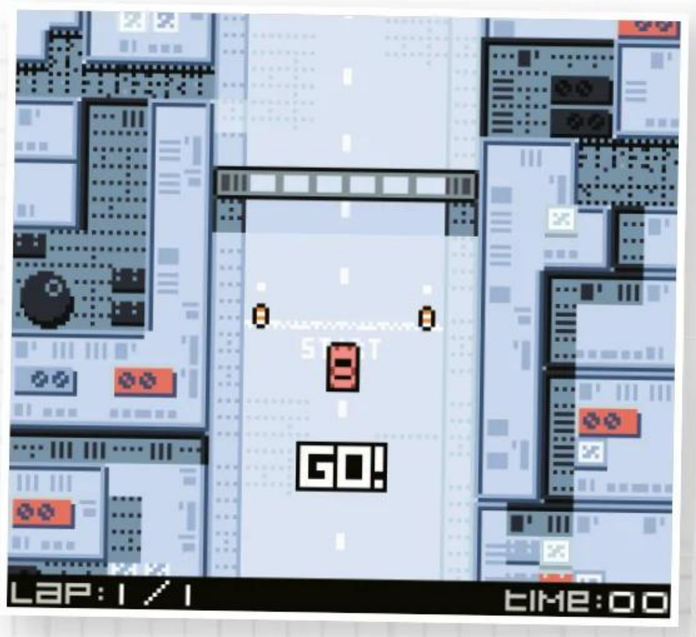
<I always wanted to make a shmup. It's hard to make what people will consider a decent shmup. I made *Starseed* on iPhone, and 10 years later it was time to make it a Game Boy game – a big screen, vertical kind of thing, really old-school. *Starseed 2* is a horizontal, more complicated kind of shooter. />

TELL US WHAT INSPIRED HOONIGANS, SHANE?

<I love the *Project Gotham Racing* games. So I figured I'd do a time-based and skill-based game for the Game Boy. I managed to do some limited AI, so there are 1v1 races in there. I also love the Genesis – I said Genesis, I'm here too long – the Mega Drive *Micro Machines* games. The art is inspired by those games. You have to move the camera dynamically so you can see the road ahead, as best you can. Keeping it running at a decent pace was the hardest thing. It got very viral on Twitter – it's like a two-month little project with 12 tracks. />

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING NEXT?

<I am going to make a word game for Game Boy next, which is inspired by *Word Forward*. />



<!--- [GAME BOY COLOR] THE CONE CHALLENGES REQUIRE YOU TO ACCURATELY DRIVE THROUGH PAIRS OF CONES WITHOUT HITTING THEM. --->

DATA BURST

HEAD OVER HEELS

FORMAT: SINCLAIR NEXT CREDITS: RUSTY PIXELS (MICHAEL WARE, SIMON BUTLER, SPACE FRACTAL) PRICE: DIGITAL £12 / PHYSICAL £22 PLUS POSTAGE WEB: RUSTYPIXELS.UK/PRODUCT/HEAD-OVER-HEELS-DIGITAL/ FUSIONRETROBOOKS.COM/PRODUCTS/HEAD-OVER-HEELS />

<BODY> **The dream team originally released this excellent remake for Kickstarter backers of the second batch of Sinclair Next hardware.** Deluxe physical versions have sold out, but standard versions (with physical SD card and printed manual in a DVD-style case) are still available. For those who haven't played this classic game by Jon Ritman and the late Bertie Drummond, Head and Heels are a pair of secret agents plotting to overthrow the Blacktooth Empire. The pair start the game in separate prison cells. Fortunately, there is a way out, and now the two agents with their special skills – Head can jump and glide, Heels can run – must reunite somehow. Picking up the Donut Gun and Donuts lets Head freeze enemies, while Heels can find the Bag to let him carry and drop useful objects. The aim is to find six crowns to free the planets and then escape back home. The gorgeous, upgraded graphics have so many great touches, including animated background features, and the superb Space Fractal soundtrack is filled with great tunes. It's still a challenging game with clever puzzles and over 500 locations to discover, including new areas, and the addition of Golden Chickens to track down. This is a truly lavish tribute to a classic Spectrum game. </BODY>

SCORE: 90%

<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] THE MEMORABLE PUZZLE WHERE YOU STEER A BIG-EARED ROBOT. --->

<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] REINCARNATION FISHES SAVE YOUR PROGRESS, BUT THE NEWLY ADDED GOLDEN CHICKENS ARE THERE AS A COLLECTABLE EXTRA TO FIND. --->

NEW GAMES NEEDED

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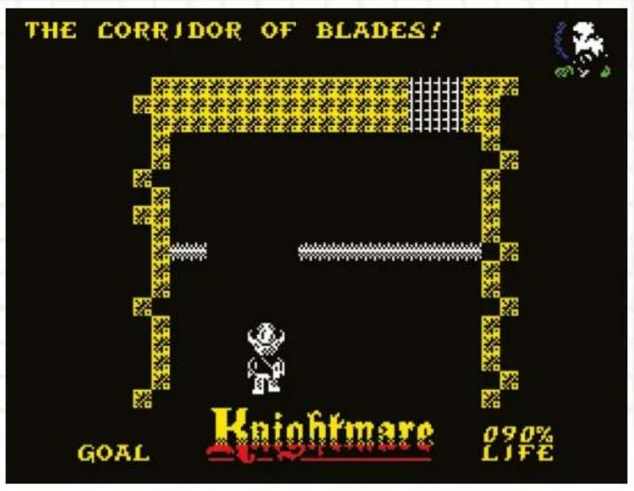
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT



<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM 128K] NASTY! TIME YOUR MOVEMENTS PAST THE ROTATING BLADES. --->

<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM 128K] DODGE THE GOBLINS AND GRAB ALL THE MOVING KEYS TO PROCEED. --->

KNIGHTMARE

<INFO FORMAT: ZX SPECTRUM (48K AND 128K VERSIONS) CREDITS: SAUSAGEWARE GAMES FOR BITMAP SOFT PRICE: DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL TBC WEB: SAUSAGEWAREGAMES.COM / BITMAPSOFT.CO.UK />

<BODY> **Welcome watchers of illusion to a new castle of confusion.** Tom Potter gave us a preview in issue 261, and the final game lives up to the hopes of *Knightmare* fans. By cleverly mixing arcade segments (where you dodge enemies or obstacles) and more thoughtful rooms (answering the Wallmonster's questions or working out a series of switches), it very much feels like the classic TV show. For 128K users, there's a superb rendition of the *Knightmare* theme by Joe Olney and some excellent in-game tunes as well. The questions are perhaps a little obscure, and certain rooms are tricky as your energy quickly drains, but overall this is very enjoyable – even if you never watched the popular programme back in the Eighties. </BODY>

SCORE: 86%

<!--- [AMSTRAD CPC] THE HERO INSPIRED BY A FLYING MAMMAL CLINGS TO A WALL. --->

<!--- [AMSTRAD CPC] DODGE THE ONCOMING TRAFFIC AND PICK UP THE TNT IN YOUR BATVEHICLE. --->

DARK KNIGHT: SHADOW OF MADNESS

<INFO FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC CREDITS: MANANUK (PHYSICAL EDITION TO BE PUBLISHED BY PLAYONRETRO) PRICE: FREE DIGITAL DOWNLOAD / PHYSICAL EDITION TBC WEB: MANANUK.ITCH.IO/DARK-KNIGHT />

<BODY> **A masked vigilante must save the city across four challenging levels.** First, our hero (who definitely isn't Batman) must rescue six hostages, then drive through the streets collecting the bombs dropped by terrorists. Stage 3 is about finding the virus and taking it to the scientists, and finally, the terrorist base must be stormed. Our agile caped crusader can double-jump, cling to walls, duck under bullets, and throw his bat-shaped boomerang to kill enemies (the boomerang even returns). Good variety in the later levels and a decent challenge will keep you playing for some time. </BODY>

SCORE: 81%

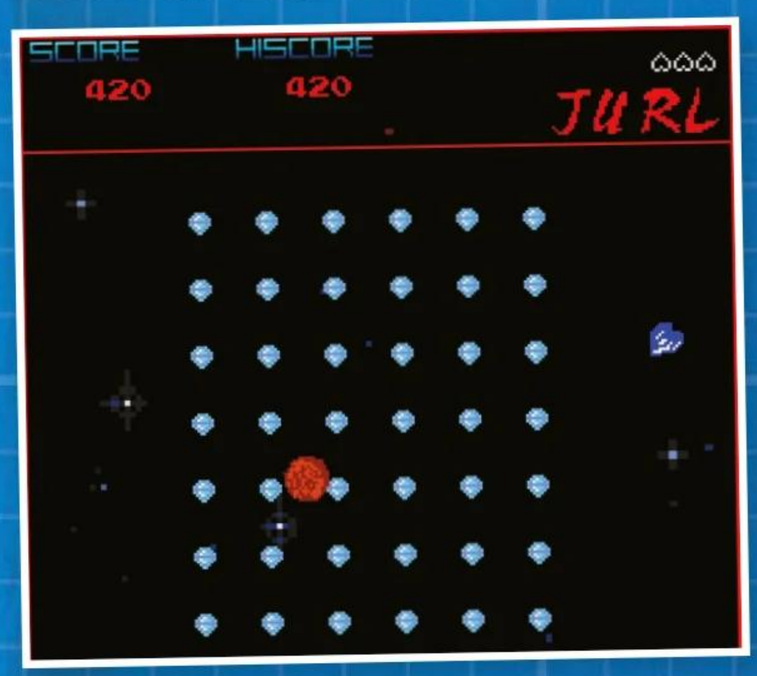
PROCESSING

<INTRO> TONSOMO ENTERTAINMENT'S JOHNNY BLANCHARD IS CREATING A NEW MULTIFORMAT GAME CALLED JURL </INTRO>

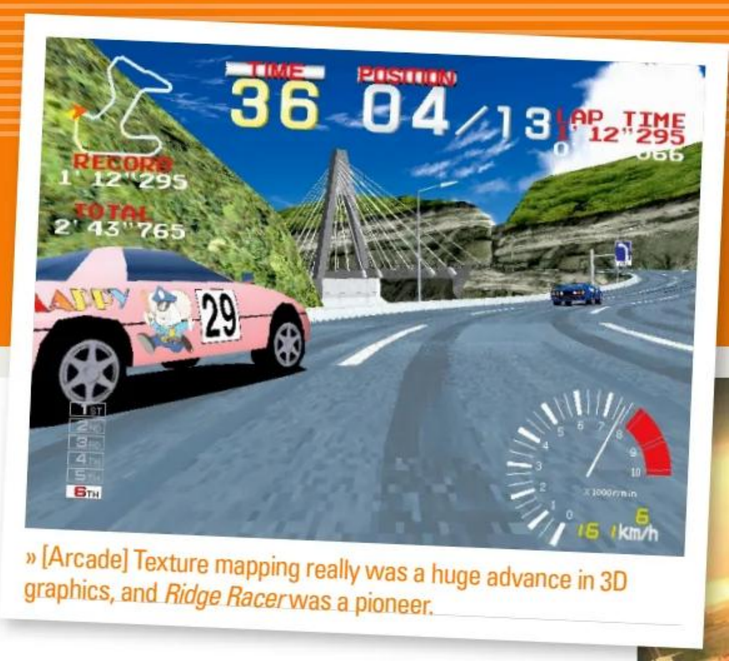
<BODY> **The original concept of Johnny Blanchard's *Jurl* can be traced back to 2004.** "The gameplay came from playing a lot of emulated *Pac-Man* and *Asteroids*, two of my favourites, and I just decided to mash the two together," we're told. "I ported the whole thing to the GP2X handheld. In recent times, the PC version came about because I wanted a project to make while learning Godot. This is also where I added the backstory of a diamond miner ignoring government warnings to stay out of a neutral zone because going in there might start an interstellar war."

Atari 2600, Lynx, PC Engine, Master System and Game Boy (Color and DMG supported) development versions can currently be found at tonsomo.itch.io/

"I've got some PCBs coming for the Game Boy and it's pretty easy to 3D print a cartridge case. I'm also considering Game Gear. I started on a PSP version a while ago. I wouldn't be surprised if I ended up releasing NES and Mega Drive versions too." Here's hoping Johnny gets to release those extras versions. </BODY>



<!--- [PC ENGINE] LATER LEVELS ADD ENEMIES THAT HOME IN ON THE PLAYER'S SHIP AS THEY COLLECT THE DIAMONDS. --->



» [Arcade] Texture mapping really was a huge advance in 3D graphics, and *Ridge Racer* was a pioneer.

A RACING REVOLUTION

We reminisce about the Ridge Racer series

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

Back in the Nineties, few games of any kind could equal the impact that Namco's *Ridge Racer* had both in the arcades and at home. With the series taking this month's cover, we felt it was high time we discussed our personal experiences with the classic franchise.

NICK

How did everyone first encounter *Ridge Racer*? I have no idea quite where it was, but for me it was definitely in an arcade rather than on the PlayStation.

DARRAN

This may sound weird, but I don't recall playing *Ridge Racer* when it first came out. I definitely saw it in arcades and must have played it, but I distinctly remember the PlayStation version over it.

TIM

Hmm, I have no idea quite where it was, but for me it was definitely on the PlayStation rather than in an arcade.

NICK

I can remember just how impressive it seemed compared to *Virtua Racing*, even as a kid. The arcade hardware arms race was crazy, looking back on it.

DARRAN

Absolutely. I would have had a Saturn at this point and would often mention to my mate Brady that *Daytona USA* was better than PlayStation *Ridge Racer*, but we both knew we were lying. It just felt arcade perfect at the time.

TIM

I've played a few of them mostly because they're not sims like *Gran Turismo*, there's just enough nonsense in there to make it way more fun than the serious ones.

DARRAN

I didn't play *Ridge Racer Revolution* on release but I did enjoy *Rage Racer* as my brother Matt owned it. *Ridge Racer Type 4* had my interest on release, but that was largely because I thought the Jogcon was really cool.

NICK

I enjoyed *Revolution*, but I remember *Rage Racer* felt surprisingly grey at the time. I was used to the more muted palette by the time *Type 4* came around and loved it. The music is always consistently great though – do you guys have much love for it?

> "You can't really go wrong with a Ridge Racer soundtrack, they're normally filled with banging tunes"
>
> DARRAN JONES

DARRAN

You can't really go wrong with a *Ridge Racer* soundtrack, they're normally filled with banging tunes. In fact, I think that's one of the main reasons I enjoy the PSP games so much, because there are so many vintage tracks to choose from.

TIM

I'm sure there's some classics on there but for some reason I'm not recalling them. Maybe I should do what Darran's been doing and start buying some videogame soundtracks.

DARRAN

Do it Tim, then I'll feel less bad about collecting yet another thing. How did everyone feel about *Ridge Racer V*? I know it didn't get amazing reviews on release and it can be quite hard, but I really like it.

TIM

I didn't get a PS2 until 2001, so missed out on it. And then my friends bought *Gran Turismo 3*. I was a bit miffed when they spent all night playing that.

NICK

I ended up picking it up in a charity shop and having a good time with it – it was just a shinier version of what had gone before, but it was very well done. I feel like it was a bit of a victim of the PS2 hype, as well as *Gran Turismo* changing expectations around how much content racing games should have.

DARRAN

Yeah, they're just car porn,

» [Xbox 360] *Ridge Racer 6* was a surprising exclusive, though the PS3-exclusive sequel shares plenty of content.

» [PC] *Ridge Racer Unbounded* feels a world apart from the prior games in the series.

but they don't offer the sheer adrenalin rush that a good *Ridge Racer* offers. Was anyone surprised when *Ridge Racer 6* became an Xbox 360 exclusive?

TIM

A bit, because I'd always associated it with Sony's consoles, and it was a launch title in Japan too.

NICK

Definitely, it was one of the games that gave me the impression that Japanese publishers were taking the console more seriously.

DARRAN

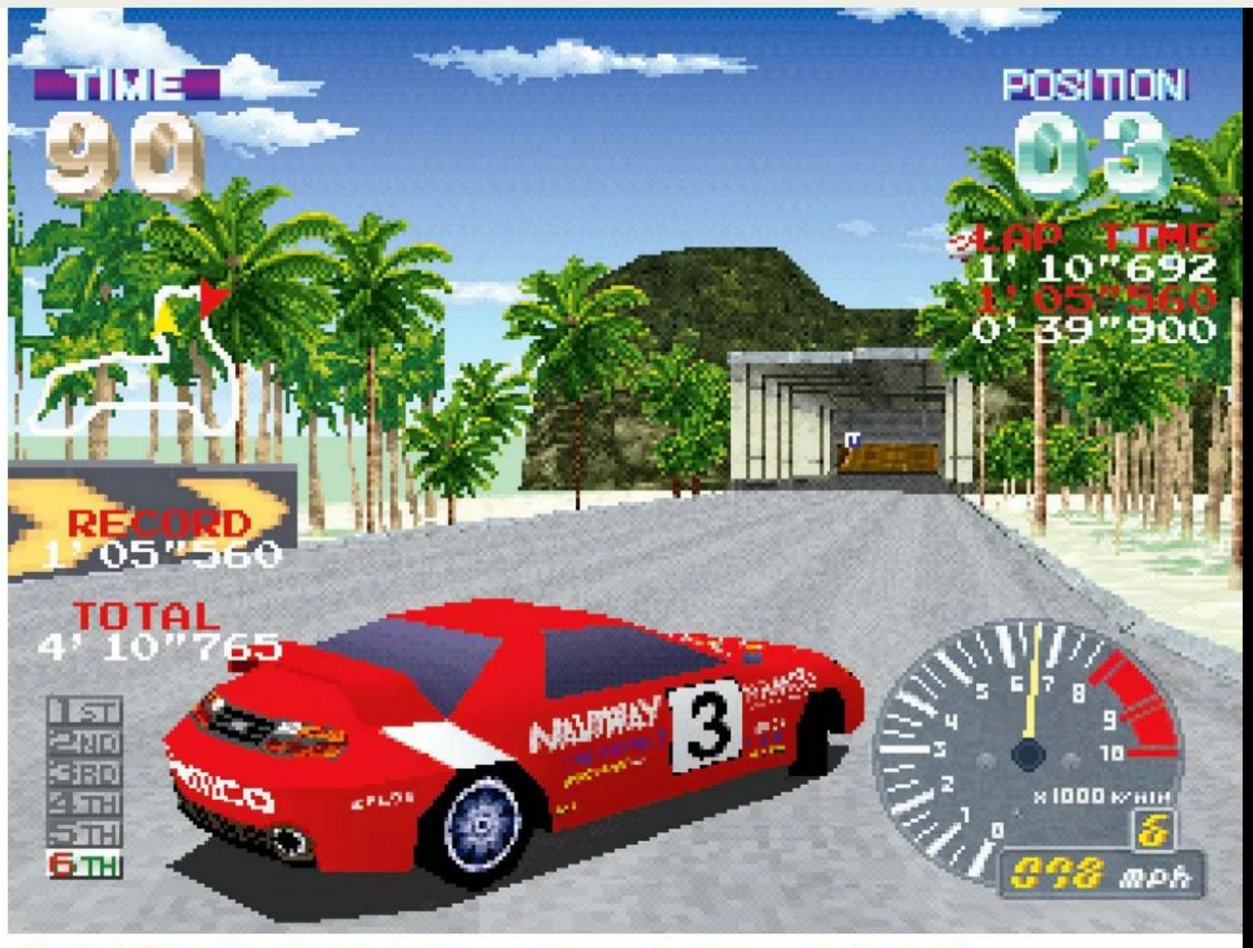
Yes, I'd agree with that assessment, Nick. I remember grabbing another copy when it was first announced as being backwards compatible but it's come down quite a bit since then. I think it's a solid racer and there's plenty to unlock in it, just like the PSP games. I'm also a big fan of *Ridge Racer 64*.

NICK

That was a good version, and while we're talking about lesser-spotted entries in the series, I really liked *Rave Racer* on the couple of occasions I got to try it. I was very pleased when its tracks were adapted for the PSP games. What did you guys think of *Ridge Racer Unbounded*?

DARRAN

See, I think *Unbounded* is a perfectly decent game, but not a good *Ridge Racer* game. I'm actually a convert of the PS Vita game as well. I gave it a very low score on release due to all the paid DLC, but I actually find myself playing it a lot still.



» [PlayStation] *Ridge Racer Revolution* felt like more of the same, though that was hardly a bad thing.

TIM

I liked how it took inspiration from *Burnout* as I loved *Burnout 2* and *3*. Didn't like how I just got it confused with the much more recent *Need For Speed Unbound*…

NICK

I just never clicked with it, it didn't have the bright colours and handling model I loved from the previous *Ridge Racer* games, and the combat aspects never felt satisfying to me in the way that *Burnout 3* did. We've not seen the series since – what do you think would be needed in a comeback?

DARRAN

Probably more than three tracks nowadays, because gamers are so entitled.

TIM

Yeah, I've not heard anyone shout, "Riiiiiidge Raaaaacer!" in ages.

DARRAN

That's because you live on your own Tim and it would be really weird if you were the one shouting it. ✱

» [PSP] Namco's track record of technical marvels continued when *Ridge Racer* made its handheld debut.

» [PS2] Do you think critics of the day were too harsh on *Ridge Racer V*?

READERS REACT

What was your first impression of Ridge Racer?

Robb from 8/16/32bit

I first saw it in a magazine, I'm sure. The first time I played it was on my friend's brand spanking new PlayStation. I was blown away by how good it looked and played. It set a bar for a new console that few release window games have ever met since.

Mike Mika

It was the first game I ever played on PlayStation. A friend imported it with the system well before the US release date and I played it non-stop for a week until I beat the 13th car and any notion that the PlayStation couldn't compete with Sega or Nintendo was erased from my brain.

James Sutherland

My first time playing it was when I got my PlayStation. Thanks to a faulty RF adapter, I had to play it in black and white and with no sound other than a static hiss. Still amazing, though. They also used to have a *Ridge Racer Full Scale* machine near us in Meadowhall, which was a fantastic experience.

Shawn Layden

My first PlayStation game experience. On pre-release hardware back in late-1994! Totally blew me away!

Anonymous X

I saw *Ridge Racer* running on an import PlayStation, January 1995, in Bournemouth's Video Game Centre. Was one of those, "Do games really look like *this* now?" moments. Hadn't seen the arcade unit yet, but as a home-console game it looked and sounded ridiculously beyond what the older home systems could offer.

dezign999

I was working at Gamefan at the time and snagged an import copy for myself. I couldn't get over what I was seeing. It was like looking into the future of gaming where an entire reality existed inside of the television sitting right in front of me.

RetroSteveUK

The *Ridge Racer* arcade machine caught my eye in our local cinema. I'd never seen texture-mapped graphics before – I couldn't believe what I was seeing!

Gui Saba

Honestly, it was a vibe feel that brought me back to the first time I'd played *Out Run*. Amazing graphics (for the time) and music, racing felt good, and it had such a unique and pervasive sense of style.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**

WIPEOUT 3 PRESS DOCUMENTS
"I don't believe there's many of these out there, though I've no idea of actual numbers. It's simple, but stands out in the best of ways."
AMOUNT PAID: £102.99

WIPEOUT 2097 A1 POSTER (PLAYSTATION POWER MAGAZINE)
"Just a poster to some. To me it's the largest, most in-your-face visual assault by the game that started it all for me."
AMOUNT PAID: £14.99

WIPEOUT OMEGA COLLECTION VINYL PRESS KIT
"Produced in a few numbers (163!) This isn't easy to get hold of and I'm overjoyed to have this absolute beauty amongst it all!"
AMOUNT PAID: £230

ANTI-GRAVITY ASSEMBLY

Declan McWilliams' WipEout collection is truly impressive

NAME:
Declan McWilliams

LOCATION:
Southampton, UK

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
Invaluable to me, but loosely between £6,000 and £7,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
PlayStation

FAVOURITE GAME:
WipEout 2097

TWITTER:
@TazonHusky

It's always nice to feature a collector with a specific focus, and Declan McWilliams owns a genuinely fantastic tribute to the *WipEout* series. "Like many other kids around the time, *WipEout 2097* was one of the games I got with my PlayStation," Declan tells us. "It captivated me, frustrated me, and opened my eyes to a whole different world of music."

Although Declan continued to buy new *WipEout* games as they were released, it was a chance encounter that ultimately led to his collection as it stands today. "I came across one of the *Omega Collection* CD press kits some time back by sheer chance on a late night eBay scroll and it sparked something in me as the timer hit zero," he says. "I won the auction for all of £33 that I didn't really have on the wage I was on at the time. Nonetheless a few days later I was holding this stunning double slab of magnetically clamped vibrant clear orange acrylic. It felt like something I shouldn't have, it was too special."

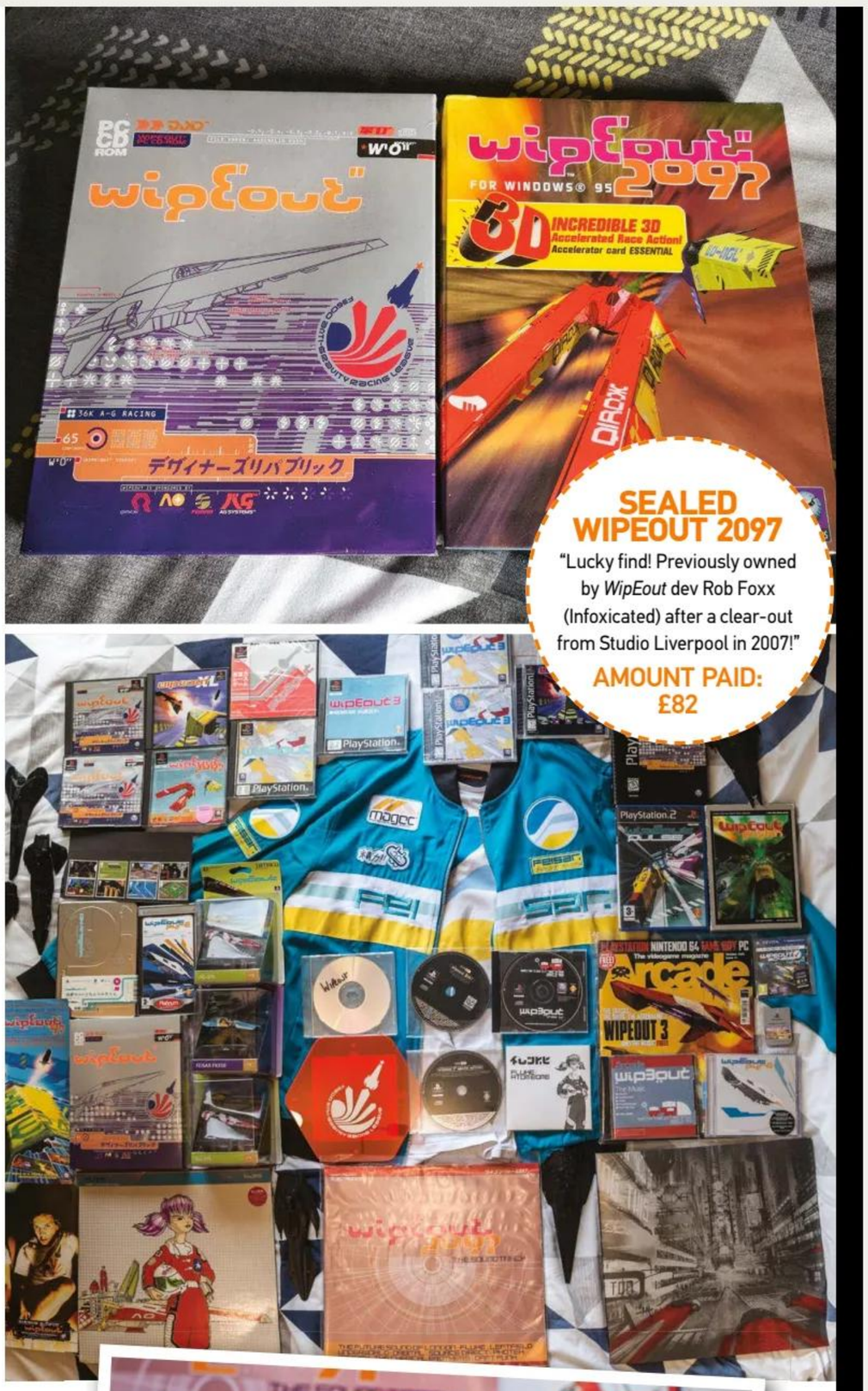
That purchase started a fire that "was not just lit, but raging from that point onwards", and Declan's room is not only painted in Feisar team colours, but is filled with numerous soundtracks, magazines, adverts, press kits and games from the series. "It's the anti-gravity racer that hits all the right buttons, and the first three games were hugely influential to so many kids like myself growing up," Declan tells us when we ask him what makes the series so special. "It's futuristic, it's high energy, it's unforgivingly difficult at times, but so incredibly rewarding when you get it just right."

As you might expect, being a big fan of the series means Declan will collect multiple versions of a game if it justifies it. "A subtle difference in box design or just having a different language over it can be interesting," he explains. "*Wip3out*'s Japanese release arguably had the coolest box art design you could have asked for, and is so wildly different from the UK release you wouldn't have known they were the same title!" Despite the general popularity of the series, Declan has still found certain items tough to track down, including a B2-sized promotional Japanese poster of *WipEout XL*. "I'm waiting for it to arrive from Japan right now," he says. "It's a Japanese exclusive, instantly making it less commonly seen in the UK, and I've only seen two or three other examples in collections."

Despite the constant search for Japanese rarities, Declan feels *WipEout* is a fairly straightforward series to collect. "There is an astounding amount of stuff out there for the series with it having been so enduring through so many console generations," he explains. "As a result, you can pick up all sorts from here, there and everywhere. You might be waiting around for the moment something real special comes up, but it's a relatively common occurrence, so in relatively little time, you could find yourself with quite a stash of *WipEout* media! Just make sure you've got more space than you think you need."

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com



SEALED WIPEOUT 2097

"Lucky find! Previously owned by *WipEout* dev Rob Foxx (Infoxicated) after a clear-out from Studio Liverpool in 2007!"

AMOUNT PAID: £82

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

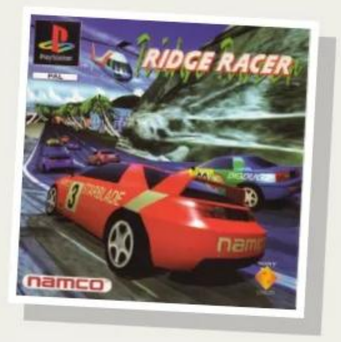
WIPEOUT 2048 SIGNED BY THE DEVELOPERS

■ "Incredibly kindly offered to me by a friend who felt that this would belong better in my collection than theirs! I was speechless."

PAID: £30

BARGAIN HUNT

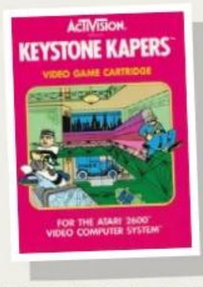
Your guide to the rising world of retro prices



THE COVER STAR

RIDGE RACER

The immense popularity of Namco's game on Sony's console means you can burn rubber with the Japanese and PAL versions for under **£10.** The US game is a little more expensive, mind.



KEYSTONE KAPERS

While Garry Kitchen's Atari 2600 game can fetch as much as **£40** in mint condition, you'll often be able to get it complete for under **£20.** What a steal!

SUPER SWIV

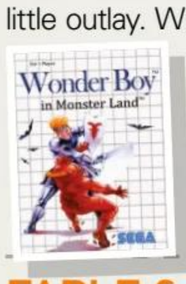
This SNES shooter is increasing in price. Complete PAL and Japan variants can hit **£90.** The US version (known as *Firepower 2000*) often clears **£100.**

DIE HARD ARCADE

Sega's Saturn conversion certainly isn't cheap. The PAL edition can clear **£120,** while the US version is even pricier. The Japanese release (known as *Dynamite Deka*) is the cheapest at **£50.** Yippie ki-ouch!

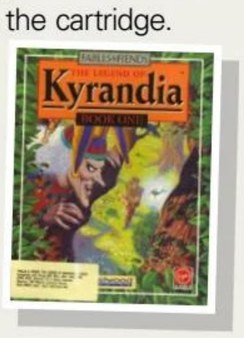
ELITE BEAT AGENTS

If you want to get groovy with your DS, you'll be able to with very little outlay. With prices rarely topping **£20,** you can tap and swipe to your heart's content.



WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND

This solid Master System conversion remains nice and cheap. It rarely clears **£30** in mint condition and is even cheaper if you just grab the cartridge.



FABLE & FIENDS: THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA – BOOK ONE

The Amiga version remains relatively easy to source and shouldn't cost more than **£20.** The PC edition of the game is similarly priced.

SUPER SMASH BROS

Prices for Nintendo's popular N64 brawler are all over the place. The Japanese edition rarely passes **£25,** while the PAL edition can be yours for **£70.** If you want the US edition you can pay as much as **£150** for the privilege.

HOW MUCH?!

THE PUNISHER

Outside of Capcom's incoming compilation, the only way to play *The Punisher* at home was on Sega's Mega Drive. As a result it's one of the pricier games to track down, with a recent PAL copy selling for an astonishing **£1,019.**

Prices correct at time of print

MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR **SHARED PASSION**

HIDDEN TREASURES

Darran has been exploring the PlayStation's library

As much as I love my N64, it's a system that doesn't really hold many surprises for me. It makes sense, as less than 400 games were released for it and due to its popularity most of its best releases have been well documented by gamers.

Sony's PlayStation on the other hand is a completely different beast and it boasts a library that's as diverse as it is sizeable. While I owned a PlayStation back in the day, it always played second fiddle to the Saturn and most of my gaming experiences on the system came from playing at the houses of friends and family who were far more into Sony's first console than I was.

It has only been in the last few years that I've begun seriously investigating the console's enormous library and one thing that's become obvious to me is that I'd have saved a fortune if I'd paid more attention to it on release. As many of you will know, I'm a big fan of shmups and there's a large number on the system, many of which are now very expensive. Selling off a large part of my collection some time back allowed me to get some of the more expensive rarities like *Harmful Park* and *Zanac X Zanac*. Fortunately, most of the other acclaimed titles I already own on the Saturn.

While I've greatly enjoyed discovering the likes of *Raiden DX*, *Sanvein* and *Stahlfeder*, they're only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the sheer amount of absurdity that can be found within the PlayStation's library. I generally shy away from PAL games so the vast majority of my collection consists of NTSC releases. Typing NTSC PS1 into eBay's search has opened my eyes to all manner of weird games and I've been buying the ones that look the most appealing.

Highlights of my late-night browsing have included such oddities as *Pepsiman*, a Pepsi-themed into-the-screen platformer, *Gamara 2000*, a slick on-rails shooter with a wonderfully bonkers English FMV story and *Suzuki Bakuhatsu*, which sees you dismantling ever-more complex bombs. Then there's *KulaQuest* (or *Kula World* as it's known in Europe), a charming puzzle game where you navigate a beach ball around increasingly complex levels, *One Piece Mansion*, which is a bizarre landlord simulator by Capcom and *Treasures Of The Deep*, an excellent underwater adventure.

The sheer variety on Sony's console is ridiculous and it's been a riot discovering games that I missed the first time around. Some of these discoveries have been amazing and include the strategy RPG *Vandal Hearts*, the first-person shooter *Disruptor*, *Soulcalibur*'s predecessor *Soul Blade* and Capcom's monstrous sequel *Dino Crisis 2*. Then there are titles like *Warpath: Jurassic Park*, which is distinctly average, but is something that I've always wanted to own. My cousin Martin, who is a massive PlayStation gamer, kindly donated a copy of *Moto Racer* which is an excellent motorbike game and he's been a font of knowledge for pointing me in the direction of more obscure games or simply offering various advice about the system.

> "The sheer variety on Sony's console is ridiculous"

YouTuber Sean Seanson is someone else who has been massively helpful in expanding my PlayStation collection thanks to his epic long-form videos that cover rare curios or every game by a specific publisher, with his most recent being a costly (for me at least) episode on the prolific Capcom. He's apparently got a Konami one in the works and my wallet is already starting to sweat.

My PlayStation collection even surpasses my Saturn collection now by 16 games. It doesn't mean I love Sega's machine any less, it's just a testament to how many more games there are on Sony's console. My Saturn collection is also well curated, with each game being carefully selected (OK, apart from a couple of shmups I bought while drunk). With the PlayStation it's more, "That looks cool," coupled with a quick press of the buy button. I'd imagine that in a few months time, my PlayStation selection will diminish in size as I sort the wheat from the chaff, while my Saturn collection will stay the same. It's unclear how long this fascination with Sony's console will last, but I'm having great fun while it does. ✱

ON THE HUNT

THE PLAYSTATION GAMES I'M STILL LOOKING FOR

GAIA SEED: PROJECT TRAP
This is one of the few pricey shmups I'd still like to get, although I'm not sure if it's worth the outlay.

WARPATH: JURASSIC PARK
Yes, I have a PAL copy of the game, but I'd prefer a full-screen NTSC version as I'm odd like that.

THE MISADVENTURES OF TRON BONNE
This is another exorbitantly priced PlayStation game and is part of the *Mega Man* series. Hopefully Capcom will reissue it.

ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE
I've been watching my cousin play this and now I fancy getting a copy myself. It still looks fantastic.

LEGEND
Another game I only knew existed because of a Sean Seanson video. Turning enemies into frogs looks fun.

I PLAYED PARASITE EVE FOR THE FIRST TIME RECENTLY AND ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT.
VALKYRIE PROFILE
vib-ribbon
WARPATH JURASSIC PARK
ZANAC X ZANAC
ZERO DIVIDE
PlayStation
[PLAYSTATION] DISRUPTOR WAS RECOMMENDED TO ME BY MARTIN AND IT'S GREAT FUN.
MANY THANKS TO YOUTUBER BLOGGO'S POW FOR SENDING THESE GAMES TO ME FOR FREE. I'M ABSOLUTELY LOVING SILENT BOMBER.
[PLAYSTATION] IT'S NOT CHEAP, BUT PEPSIMAN IS VERY ENTERTAINING, IF RATHER SHORT.

STAGE 1
00'41"05
16
LAW
MICHELLE
[PLAYSTATION] GAMARA 2000 IS WONDERFUL, DESPITE HAVING NO SCORING SYSTEM.
[PLAYSTATION] I DO ENJOY FIGHTING GAMES AND TEKKEN 2 IS A CLASSIC.
HERE'S A SELECTION OF MY NUMEROUS JAPANESE PLAYSTATION SHMUPS.
I'M CONSTANTLY FINDING QUIRKY NEW GAMES TO ADD TO MY COLLECTION.
[PLAYSTATION] I STAY AWAY FROM PAL STUFF, BUT AT LEAST ASSAULT RIGS IS A WELL-OPTIMISED GAME.
[PLAYSTATION] I'VE BEEN ENJOYING THE WEIRDNESS OF THE INCREDIBLE CRISIS, WHICH I NABBED FROM CEX.
ALTHOUGH I LIKE MORE ESOTERIC FARE, I STILL ENJOY THE CLASSICS.

IT'S ODD, BUT I LIKE IT

Readers share their favourite quirky PlayStation games

Garret
Wild 9, because it's silly. It's a forgotten classic and you get to torture your enemies.

earlybird
OverBlood comes to mind for an oddball PS1 game. It's a super-weird game but also strangely endearing.

KaL
Kaze No Notam, a Japanese exclusive hot air balloon game. It transcends its blocky graphics and short draw distance via an incredible jazz-pop soundtrack and a loopy randomised movement system, leaving you relaxed and frustrated in equal measure. True zen gaming and an artistic triumph.

N3kovita
Frogger was so much fun. I think that it is the only videogame I've ever played with my mom.

NeonVoid51
Wild 9! You play as a dude named Wex and you torture enemies with a grappling beam weapon called the Rig. It has great music and some challenging levels.

Steve Hall
Team Buddies (PAL) – so cute and bright, almost Lego-like, and then the buddies suddenly start swearing their little pill-shaped heads off.

kyuss25
I've much love for this banger of a console. My favourite oddball game is *Skullmonkeys*.

richard nicholas
It has to be *Bishi Bashi*, what a complete oddball game that sucked me in straight away.

PD
Easily *Tombi!*, the music is still a joy to listen to today and there was nothing as satisfying to me as a kid than throwing one pig at another.

Chris
One of my favourites would be *Kula World*. Who'd have thought a game about guiding a beach ball around levels would be so fun and challenging?

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – **TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of one of our classic retro books. Good luck everyone!

STAR LETTER

TOTAL! RECALL

» As well as *Total!*, Andy Dyer worked on games magazines including *Commodore Format*, *Mega*, *PlayStation Max* and *nRevolution*.

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

I was really sorry to hear of the recent passing of the videogame journalist, Andy Dyer. My brother and I received our NES as a Christmas present, around the same time that *Total!* magazine was first published. I loved *Total!*, not just for its detailed reviews and features but also for its humour and the funny cartoon pictures of Andy, Steve Jarrett and the other writers, dressed up as characters like Mario and the Ninja Turtles in their reviews.

A few years ago, I was lucky to find some old issues of *Total!* in a local Oxfam bookshop. The first issue brought back memories of the Greek myth-themed *The Battle of Olympus*, which had received a 92% rating from Andy in his review. This persuaded my dad to purchase the game, and I have fond memories of us playing through it together (with some help from a complete guide in a later *Total!* issue). Thanks Andy.

I always enjoy **Retro Gamer**, and I hope that you could maybe cover *Total!* magazine in a future issue.

Jeff Bone

Thanks for sharing your memories of what Andy's work in *Total!* meant to you, Jeff. Andy's passing came all too soon and he is greatly missed by both family and friends, including those of us who shared an office with him. Ultimately, any writer is hoping to make a connection with their readers, and your letter is proof that he did exactly that. As for a feature on *Total!*, it's been a while since we've highlighted a specific magazine, but we'll certainly consider it – readers, let us know if you're interested, and which other magazines you'd like to see.

» Here is Jeff's haul of *Total!* mags. We rather wish we found things like this in used bookshops.

ARCADE ACQUIRED

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

I just recently purchased two Arcade1Up cabinets, *Star Wars* and *Pac-Man Legacy*. What are your thoughts on the recent demand for these cabinets in general? I would love to see an in-depth feature on the company and how it all came about. Personally, I'm loving them! The only things stopping me getting more is space and obviously the cost, but I do think they're worth it for what you get. The times I've bought *Pac-Man* over the years is unbelievable, be it on Atari, Master System, PlayStation, etc, but there's something about playing it on an arcade cabinet that's made me love it all over again. Just trying to beat my last score has never really been something that appealed to me before playing these, and now I can't stop!

Steve Crofts

We're glad you're enjoying your cabinets, Steve. We totally understand the demand for these replica cabinets – plenty of people don't have access to arcade games in their local areas, nor the expertise needed to maintain original hardware from decades ago. You're not the only person to request such a feature, so we'll see what we can do.

» Steve kindly showed us his cabinets – that *Star Wars* control panel is hard to replicate normally.

NO LOVE FOR RUBBER?

To Iain (or one of the **RG** gang),

It is the first time I am writing to you being an avid buyer of **RG** since 2013. Thank you for a fantastic magazine that has kept me entertained, educated and informed over the years and is essential for anyone with a passion for retro games or gaming!

Iain wouldn't be the first or the last to speak out about not being keen on the original 'rubber-keyed wonder' – the ZX Spectrum 16/48K. In fact, I'd wager a bet that there is a 'silent majority' that prefer later iterations of the machine! Some prefer rubber (no pun intended!), others prefer a toast rack, while some, like myself and Iain, prefer the +2 (in black of course) or the posher ones prefer a +3!

It's all about preference (different strokes for different folks). Just because one doesn't like a particular model of the machine doesn't and shouldn't make us pariahs. Back in the Nineties, you could prefer the 1980 MK3 Ford Escort over the 1986 MK4 and no one batted an eyelid!

Speccy fans are Speccy fans. We are all old enough (and wise, hopefully!) to know it's all about the games and memories no

» Call us heathens, but after starting with a hard-keyed Spectrum it's hard to embrace the rubber wonder.

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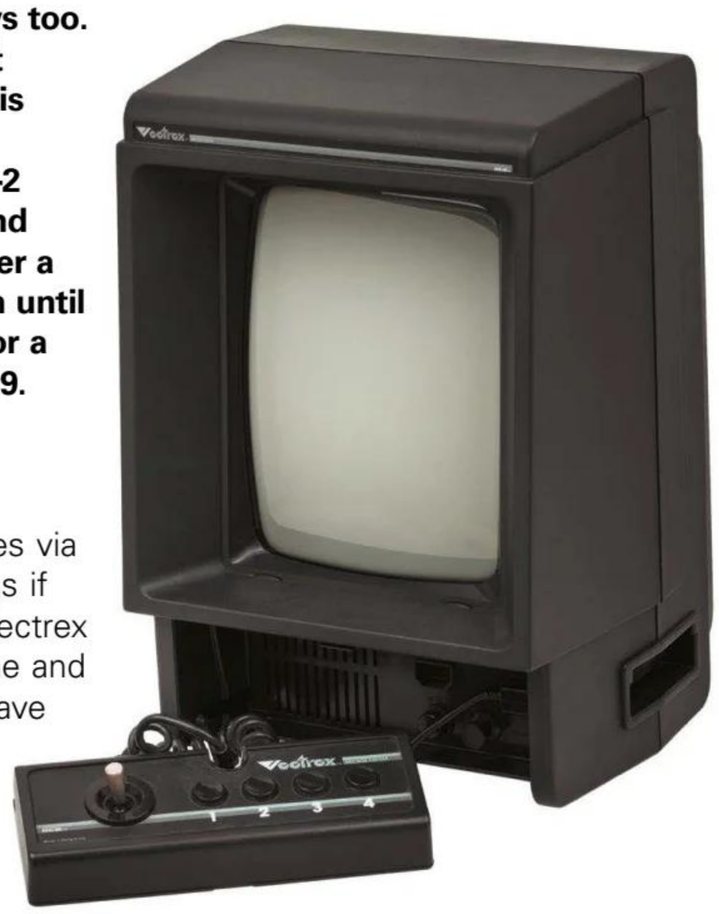
matter where you were on the hardware timeline!
Chris Bateman

We couldn't agree more, Chris. It's silly to focus on the minor things that divide us when there's so much that we have in common. As it goes, the only member of the team that currently owns a Spectrum is Nick, and he has a +3 as he prefers the solid keys too. In fact, as the youngest member of team RG, his first experience of the Spectrum was with a +2 in the early Nineties, and he didn't even encounter a rubber-keyed Spectrum until he disassembled one for a technology class in 1999.

VECTREX VEXED

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
I have all the older issues via my iPad and was curious if you have ever done a Vectrex issue? My friend has one and I was sure you would have done a feature on it. However, I can't seem to find anything. Could you tell me what issue to look in? Thanks!
Matt

Hi Matt, see Retroinspection in issue 35 and the Collector's Guide in issue 104. It's been a while since we've given the Vectrex a big feature, which feels like it needs to be rectified



» In fairness, we've been scared of the Vectrex since Darran's one took out our office's power.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Out And About

AEW returned to Wembley Stadium for the massive All In event this summer, and the team's wrestling fans were watching. Tim enjoyed the show from the comfort of his home, while Nick travelled to see Bryan Danielson win the world championship in person. Darran and Andy both went to see *Alien Romulus*, and agreed that it beat their expectations and was the best film the series has seen in decades.

Your say

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite Ridge Racer game?

» [PS2] *Ridge Racer V* from 2000 was a launch title for the PlayStation 2.

Zayne/Zed/Whatever
Rage Racer, if it counts. Gritty and sometimes masochistic, but it blew me away at the time.

Reinier Vreeswijk
The arcade version of *Ridge Racer 2*. The version with multiplayer and rear mirrors!

Héctor Lara Anguiano
Ridge Racer just for being the first in the series and the PlayStation-launching killer app.

Windom Violenoué
Revolution for me, I like later titles but they drifted (lol) away from the pure arcade feeling that I fell for. *Revolution* also had *Rotterdam Nation 94* which was an update on the already class song from the original.

Louis Walker
Ridge Racer 2 on the PSP. It feels like a love letter to the Nineties *Ridge Racer* era and one of the few PSP racing games to run at a flawless 60fps.

Gregory Moffett
Ridge Racer 64 is the one I have the fondest memories of! Being a predominantly Nintendo household (in fact, it would have been exclusively at that point, with SNES, N64 and GB) meant this was the first *Ridge Racer* I got the chance to own. It's quite difficult to go back to!

Jeff's Retro Gaming
R4. Everything about it is sublime from the music to the menu design and the visuals/lighting. It might be the greatest arcade racer of all time!

Shahin Ghazi-Noory
Going to give *Ridge Racer 7* some love… As there was nothing else of interest at the launch of the PS3! But *Revolution* was the first game I ever got to play on PlayStation. Even now I remember how much the whole experience blew my mind.

Leina
Ridge Racer Type 4. Superb graphics, sublime arcade handling and a soundtrack that's perfect for driving both in the game and in real-life.

Paul Matthew
Ridge Racer on the 3DS for the variety of awesome tracks and a similar aesthetic to the original game.

retro GAMER

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Brilliant!!

DASHHHHH!

Elite Beat Agents

MUSIC IS EVERYTHING

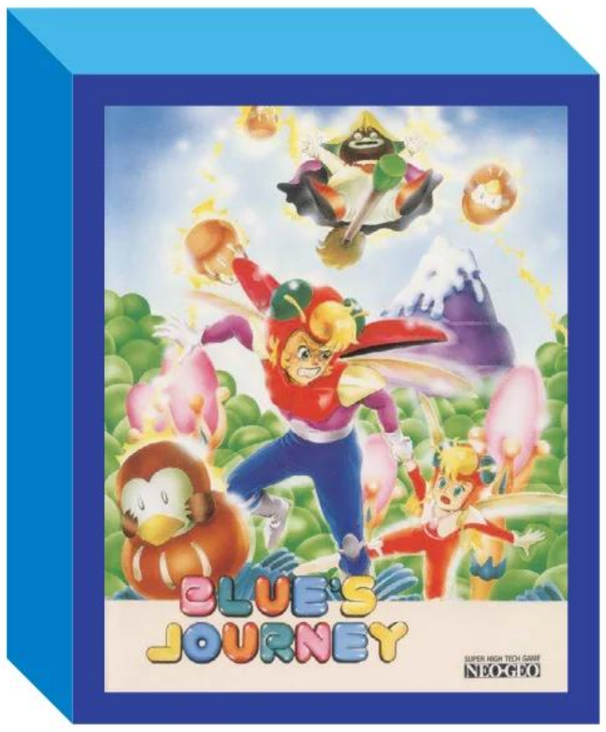
» NINTENDO DS » 2006 » INIS

If you were to browse my DS collection you'll find both the excellent *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan* and its sequel. However, I don't own iNiS' other DS music game *Elite Beat Agents*. As an international take on *Ouendan* iNiS' game is identical in terms of its mechanics. That means you use the stylus to tap and swipe the indicated areas on the touch-screen in time to the music, while a narrative-led story plays out on the top screen.

The anime-style presentation of *Ouendan* and its excellently crafted tunes had me hooked from the start, and while I wasn't particularly skilled at it, I found it extremely hard to put down. From the opening energetic track of Asian Kung-Fu Generation's *Loop & Loop* that features a student trying to study while his noisy family gab in the background, to Hitomi Yaida's heart-breaking *Over The Distance* featuring a man leaving heaven so he can tell his wife he loves her one last time, it's a magnificent fusion of audio and imagery.

Elite Beat Agents follows this formula to the letter, but somehow it falls flat. There's no denying that it's as well crafted as its Eastern counterparts, but it lacks the personality of the *Ouendan* games. That's not to say it doesn't try though. A meteorologist tries to change the weather to Earth Wind & Fire's *September* so she doesn't disappoint her son, while a taxi driver rushes a woman to hospital while Avril Lavigne's *Sk8ter Boi* belts out in the background. Ultimately, it's the choice of songs that causes *Elite Beat Agents* to falter for me. You'll still get a kick out of it if you don't mind the US-focussed soundtrack, and the mechanics are as good as ever, but *Elite Beat Agents* highlights, to me at least, that a rhythm game is only as good as the music that powers it. ✱

ENDGAME



BLUE'S JOURNEY

» There was a time when the Neo Geo wasn't known primarily for its fighting games, and in those early days this colourful outing flew the flag for the platform genre. Blue is out to save Raguy from the Daruma Empire, which has brought industrialisation and pollution to the formerly harmonious planet. What happens when his journey reaches its end?

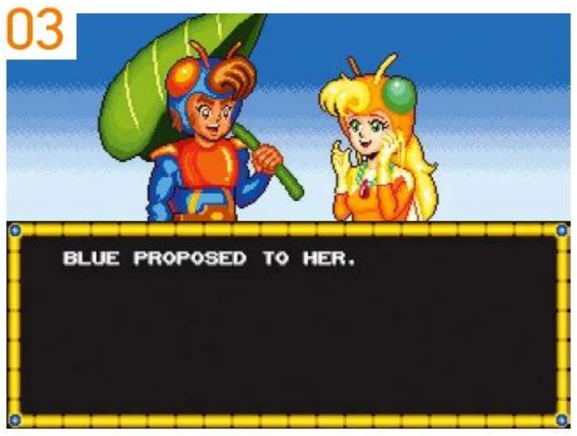
01

» The big bad leader of the Daruma has been vanquished, and rather than trying to fit into the social structure on Raguy, the whole tribe has simply packed up and left the planet entirely.

02

» Nobody is bothered by that, mostly because the environment is no longer being trashed. In fact, the air quality was doing a number on Princess Fa's asthma, so she's rather happy.

03

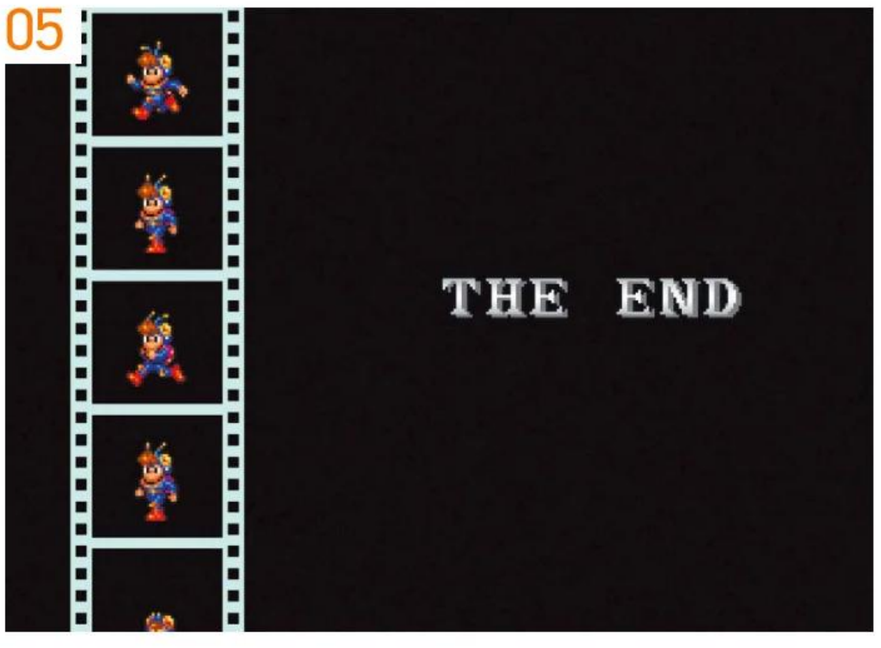


» With his self-confidence now through the roof, Blue decides to go out on a limb and ask for Princess Fa's hand in marriage. Could she really consider a commoner for a partner?

04

» No, she could not. Wealth and status are the things that matter to someone of her royal lineage. Never mind that Blue saved the planet, nor that he can shrink and enlarge his body at will – which has benefits we'll leave to your imagination – he just didn't get paid enough for doing it.

05



» So what have we learned? Firstly, virtuous acts should be done for their intrinsic value, rather than the desire to impress a potential partner. Secondly, Blue probably dodged a bullet. But lastly, if he's determined to woo the financially fixated Princess Fa, he'll need a higher score.

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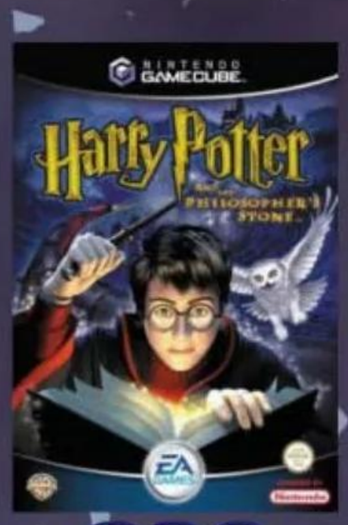

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